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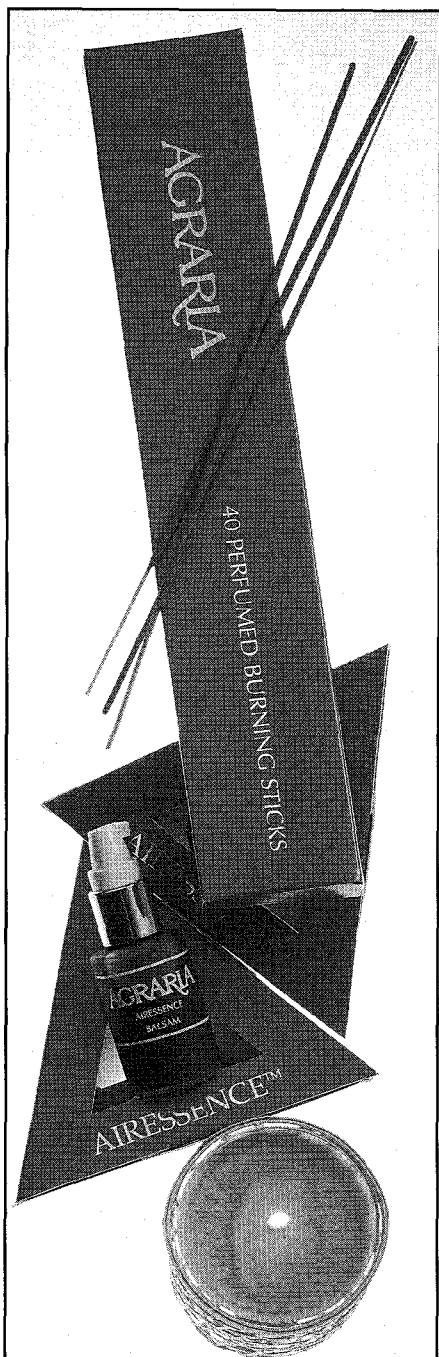


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THE NEW YORKER

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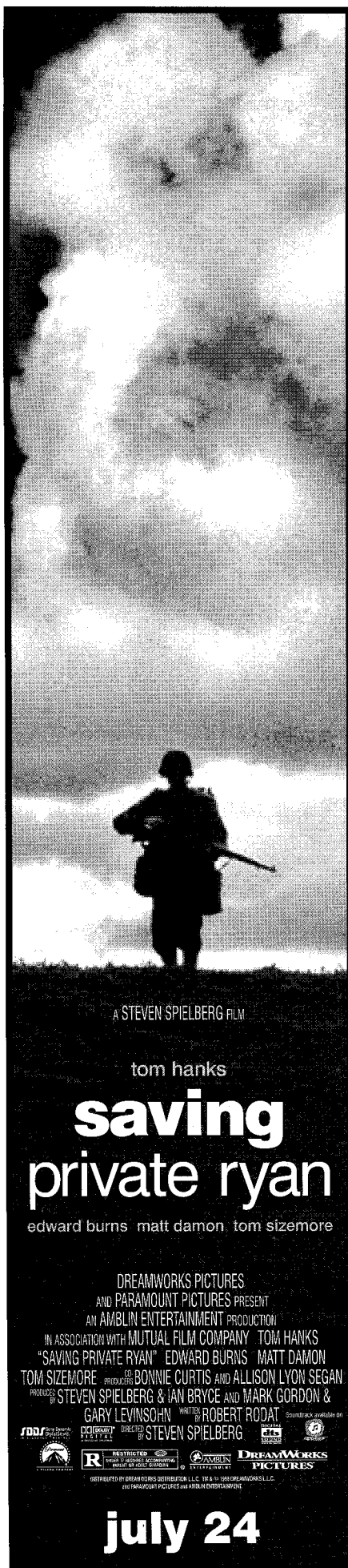
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SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW

How tradition and change took a journey together.

BY TINA BROWN

IT is almost exactly six years ago that I was asked to trade the big top of *Vanity Fair* for the cloisters of West Forty-third Street: *The New Yorker*, home of the tiny bylines and the titanic talents, awaited me. The assignment I had been handed was renewal. And renewal would mean change.

The prospect of change was, of course, bound to provoke a measure of consternation. In my first few weeks, I became used to baleful glances and swiftly closing doors. People were suspicious, and had a right to be. There was so much to defend, and so much that was worth defending. Even if its readers had begun to drift away, *The New Yorker* remained a citadel of literary culture. But retreating behind the moat and closing the siege doors on the world was, I believed, a self-defeating way to champion *The New Yorker's* values, and I soon discovered that I was not as alone as I imagined.

On my first day, Harold Brodkey poked his bald, subversive pate into my temporary office. "Beware of *New Yorker* fakery!" he counselled. "People have *always* said *The New Yorker* is going to hell." Then the brusque ad-

monition: "Don't be a curator." I was a little apprehensive when Brendan Gill, the sprightly septuagenarian who had been a mainstay of the magazine since the thirties, took me to lunch at one of his clubs, the Century. "The healthiness of change!" he cried, with a theatrical waggle of a bony finger. "Everyone thinks of *The New Yorker* as a monolith. But there have been so many *New Yorkers*—early Ross and late Ross, early Shawn, middle Shawn, and, so help me, late Shawn. Now we are in the rosy dawn of early Brown."

Crossing the office piazza on my second day, I was startled by a nicotine rasp from the direction of the Books department: "Great heels, Tina!" The welcoming voice belonged to Edith Oliver, the ancient Off-Broadway babe, whose tart reviews had appeared in these pages for decades. And then there was John Updike. Within days, he had contributed a bagatelle to our resurrected version of *Shouts & Murmurs*, and it was followed by ten more articles, reviews, stories, and poems in the next six months. "I did try to contribute my mite to your ongoing renovation of the magazine," he wrote me the other

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day, “in part to please you and in part because I so strongly believe in the magazine as a unique entity, an evolving but still lofty benchmark in American journalism.” I came to treasure the sight of Updike’s austere, erect back as he paused at the office of a colleague during one of his rare visits.

It was also gratifying to see the pleasure that other veterans, such as Roger Angell and Lillian Ross, took in the talent of new colleagues, among them Anthony Lane, who came aboard as movie critic, and Alex Ross, who joined us as music critic. The master stylist Joseph Mitchell, who until his death still strolled the corridors in a Hildy Johnson fedora, would sometimes buttonhole me, his blue eyes intent, to laud the work of the new guy in the next office, Hilton Als, who had joined us after stints at the *Village Voice* and *Vibe*. Edith Oliver was proud to double with a new colleague, John Lahr. And writers such as Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Simon Schama brought exhilarating versatility and intellectual range. At the same time, we opened the pages to photographers, starting with Richard Avedon, to the color of artists like Edward Sorel and Bruce McCall, and to the provocations of Art Spiegelman.

Sometimes the pleasure was in seeing someone *become* new. An editor, Nancy Franklin, stepped out and found her voice. Alison Rose discovered that her best story was her own. Connie Bruck broke out of her business bailiwick to report on rap music and Middle East diplomacy. Adam Gopnik rebelled against his art-world pigeonhole and became a Paris Journal writer in the tradition of Janet Flanner.

So *The New Yorker* did change. We opened our doors and the world rushed in. But when I look back I realize how much the experience changed me, too. Each day, I had to thrash out my ideas with people who understood—and cared fervently about—the magazine’s essential character. *The New Yorker*’s Caslon typeface was, I discovered, a polygraph test for writing: mediocre prose,

however innocuous it might be elsewhere, looked shifty-eyed and guilty in our galleys, and out it went. Was the writing good enough for *The New Yorker*? That was every day’s foremost question. And though the rigor of this process could be wearing, the magazine’s evolution depended on it. We were always in negotiation with the past, even as we embraced the present.

We live in a world of niches, the marketing folk assure us: every magazine, like every ad, now seems to be aimed at a particular Zip Code or income bracket or interest or identity. So it can seem preposterous—pure chutzpah—to insist on publishing a magazine that is written and edited for that supposedly vanishing paragon: the intelligent general reader. But *The New Yorker* does stand for that ideal. We have gone on and we will go on because we believe that the world is full of people—in every Zip Code, of every income and interest and identity—for whom fresh, witty, and thoughtful writing is one of life’s necessities. There’s a place for specialization, for fragments, for “targeting”; but no culture can survive without a glimpse of the whole. And that’s what *The New Yorker* is for. It’s where you read about microbes and megabytes, Presidents and pianists, fictional doings and factual goings on, reason and madness, the gravely important and the beguilingly trivial—all in one place, with room left over for the odd (sometimes very odd) cartoon. Mem-

bers of a vast cosmopolitan community, extending far beyond Manhattan, have come to recognize in the pages of *The New Yorker* a civilization, their civilization, in conversation with itself.

Earning the right to be the editor of *The New Yorker*, day after day, is the burden of this job, and its reward. My successor, David Remnick, is known to readers for his lucid prose, his incisive curiosity, and his warm heart. Both as a writer and as a reader, he loves and understands the institution and will strive, as an editor, to honor it.

For six years, *The New Yorker* was the love of my life, and love does not come without pain. But there was immense joy and satisfaction as well. Years from now, when literary archeologists write of us, they will find the passionate memos, the cryptic E-mails, the midnight faxes furiously contesting a headline, a paragraph, an illustration, a caption, a point of view: communiqués of a work always in progress, which circulated among an extraordinary group of men and women striving to make and remake America’s finest magazine.

To have led and learned from that group for six years was my delight and my good fortune, and a privilege, too. I thank the writers, editors, artists, and photographers, and all my *New Yorker* colleagues and friends, who, instead of entombing themselves in the past, joined me on a thrilling editorial journey to the future. And I thank the readers, old and new, who came along with us. ♦



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BILL MAULDIN (Illustration, p. 30) created Willie and Joe, the paradigmatic dogfaces of the Second World War, for the Army newspaper *Stars and Stripes*. A political cartoonist, he has won two Pulitzer Prizes. ♦

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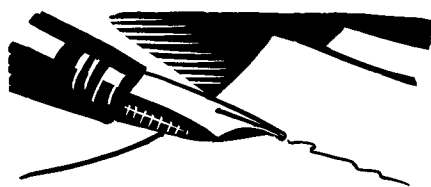
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SPIN CITY

In "The Spin Myth" (July 6th), Malcolm Gladwell explains how the public-relations legend Edward L. Bernays invented spin. I started tracking Bernays in 1956, and it always appeared to me that his major contribution to the field of public relations, of which he was unashamedly proud, was as a master of self-promotion. (Not the least of his achievements was the full page a Boston newspaper devoted to the fact that he was found in a local motel with his housekeeper at the age of a hundred and one.) Yet it should be noted that Bernays was also a master of self-criticism. While he admitted to the flamboyant stunt to introduce women to cigarettes—which Gladwell describes in detail—he later regretted it when he realized that smoking was bad for the health, and said so many times. For years, Bernays used the incident to show the power of public relations and why they should be handled with care.

HOWARD PENN HUDSON
Editor-Publisher, *Public Relations Quarterly*
Rhinebeck, N.Y.

Mr. Gladwell lumps me together with other propagators of "The Spin Myth," but in the same 1996 article in which I posited the existence of the Media-Spindustrial Complex I went on to make one of the points that Gladwell makes: that the rise in spinning has been accompanied by an upsurge in public disbelief. Indeed, in the last national election cycle political consultants of both parties discovered that they had to reach an advertising audience three times as large as they had a decade earlier in order to achieve a demonstrable impact in tracking polls. The consultants attributed this phenomenon to voters' understanding of and willingness to tune out the mechanisms of spinning—a supposition I duly reported.

RANDALL ROTHENBERG
New York City

LET HIM EAT CROW

The report in *The Talk of the Town* (Ink, by Bruce Feiler, July 6th) about John Irving's opposition to Act 60, the Vermont school-equity legislation, was dismaying. If, in the world according to Irving, the haves will be well educated and the have-nots will not, society will be fundamentally unfair. John Adams, the principal drafter of the Massachusetts Constitution and the second President of the United States, understood the importance of high-quality public education to the preservation of a free and democratic society. In an essay published in the *Boston Gazette* in 1765, he wrote, "Liberty cannot be preserved without a general knowledge among the people." For this reason, he added, "the preservation of the means of knowledge among the lowest ranks, is of more importance to the public than all the property of all rich men in the country." Adams's principles are no less true today. If Act 60 is implemented, all of us, including Irving, will benefit.

MICHAEL D. WEISMAN
Boston, Mass.

Bruce Feiler mentions that two hundred and eleven relatively poor Vermont towns will receive school funds from the richer towns under Act 60. These poorer towns make the wealth of "gold" towns like Dorset, where John Irving lives, possible. By choosing to resist development and opting for farms and forests, these towns have preserved the rural beauty that attracts tourists to Vermont. If every town in the state looked like Dorset and had the same high-density development, no one would visit. But now that farmers and other local Vermonters who have made the state what it is want our fair share, ungrateful, misinformed millionaires are screaming foul.

ED LOPATA
Manager, Brattleboro Area Farmers' Market
Marlboro, Vt.

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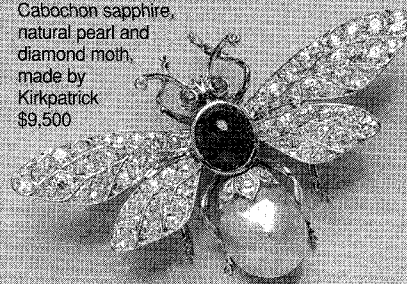
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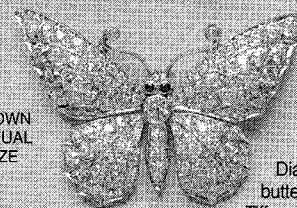
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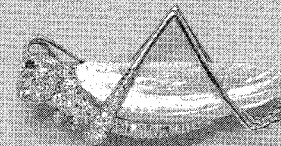
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OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

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COLLECTED STORIES—Uta Hagen stars as a mentor to a young novelist, in Donald Margulies's 1997 drama. Previews begin July 28. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

AN EVENING WITH JERRY HERMAN—The songwriter ("Hello, Dolly!," "Mame") stars with Lee Roy Reams and Florence Lacey in a revue of his own songs. In previews through July 25. Opens July 28 at 7. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

HURLYBURLY—A revival of David Rabe's 1984 black comedy. Opens July 22 at 8 and continues through Aug. 2. (Samuel Beckett, 412 W. 42nd St. 841-5524.)

LINCOLN CENTER FESTIVAL 98—The British troupe Théâtre de Complicité in its 1992 play, "The Street of Crocodiles," based on the stories of the writer and painter Bruno Schulz, a Polish Jew who was murdered by Nazis. Through July 26. (John Jay Theatre, 10th Ave. at 58th St.)... ¶ "F@ust: Version 3.0," a multimedia interpretation of Goethe's play, by the Barcelonan theatre troupe La Fura dels Baus. July 22-25 at 8 and July 26 at 2. (New York State Theatre, 721-6500.)

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING—The Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival's second offering of the summer. Previews July 22-24. Opens July 25 at 8 and continues through Aug. 16. (Boscobel Restoration, Garrison, N.Y. For ticket information and directions, call 914-265-9575.)

OPENED RECENTLY

ART—Yasmina Reza's farce is a splendid vehicle for three masterly actors, Victor Garber, Alan Alda, and Alfred Molina. They portray friends whose fifteen-year relationship is threatened when one of them buys a large white canvas for two hundred thousand francs. Directed by Matthew Warchus. (Reviewed in our issue of 3/23/98.) (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE BEAUTY QUEEN OF LEENANE—The precocious Anglo-Irish playwright Martin McDonagh's riveting winter's tale, set in a rural Irish cottage, about an aged mother and her virgin forty-year-old daughter, who is trapped in a punishing solitude. It's a simple, primitive story, yet it is filled with complex emotional surprises and reversals. (3/16/98) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

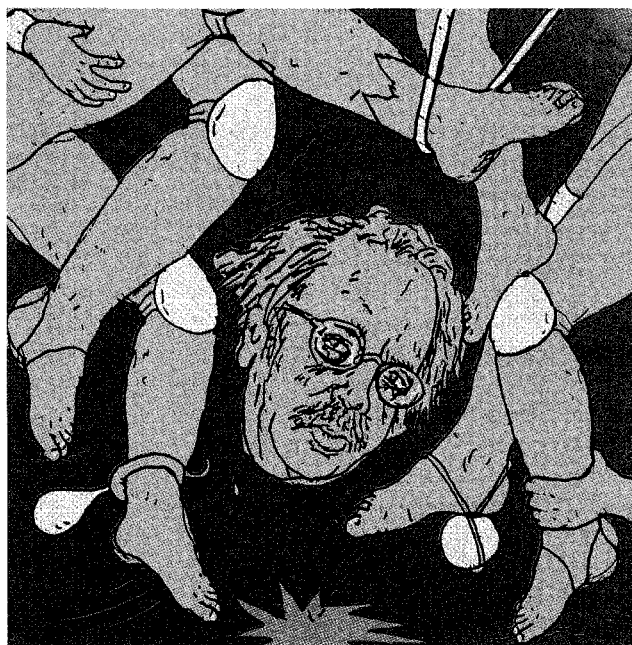
CABARET—A mesmerizing production of the Kander and Ebb musical. Here, the dancers at the Kit Kat Klub, the symbol of anything-goes Weimar Germany, look shell-shocked and stigmatized. As the Emcee, Alan Cumming is astonishing—with his bruised-looking body, his huge, knowing eyes, and his satanic

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energy, he's a spectacle of mixed messages. Natasha Richardson, as Sally Bowles, casts a spectral glow. Directed by Sam Mendes. (4/6/98) (Kit Kat Klub, 124 W. 43rd St. 719-1300.)

CAPITOL STEPS—The troupe of former congressional aides and interns presents its latest political-comedy revue, "Unzippin' My Doo-Dah and Other National Priorities." (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

CHICAGO CITY LIMITS—The improv company presents its latest revue, "@Chicago City Limits.comedy." (Chicago City Limits Theatre, First Ave. at 61st St. 888-5233.)



Various directors take a crack at the works of Richard Foreman, in "No Strings Attached, Part Two: Mind Attack!"

DINAH WAS—Oliver Goldstick's play about the late blues singer Dinah Washington, who is portrayed by the dynamic Yvette Freeman, trots out every blues-queen cliché in the book. But never mind: Freeman's powerful performance and evocative singing, and the general high spirits, make this a memorable evening. (Gramercy Theatre, 127 E. 23rd St. 307-4100.)

FALSETTOLAND—William Finn and James Lapine's 1990 musical, in a National Asian American Theatre Company staging. (Vineyard Theatre, 108 E. 15th St. 505-3003. Closes Aug. 4.)

HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH—Hedwig, as created by John Cameron Mitchell and Stephen Trask, is a sweet transsexual singer from East Berlin, whose cabaret performance cum stadium act becomes a smart, funny, and very moving exploration of the redemptive, if perhaps fleeting, power of love. Michael Cerveris has stepped in for Mr. Mitchell, who will return to the title role on Aug. 5. (Jane Street Theatre, Hotel Riverview Ballroom, 113 Jane St. 239-6200.)

HIGH SOCIETY—This musical, based on Philip Barry's play "The Philadelphia Story" and the subsequent movie "High Society," has all the kick of flat champagne. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

ICE FACTORY 98—The SoHo Think Tank's summer series continues with Sander Hicks's "The Breaking Light," a Marxist drama. July 23-25 at 7. The festival runs through Aug. 15. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 966-4844.)

THE IRISH...AND HOW THEY GOT THAT WAY—This revue by Frank McCourt, author of the best-selling memoir "Angela's Ashes," is a generally good-natured if somewhat choppy amalgam of historical tidbits, quotations from letters and speeches, and Irish songs from the past two centuries, performed by a versatile and charming cast of six singers and musicians. Deftly directed by Charlotte Moore. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

JAYSON—A musical by Jeff Krell, based on his gay cartoon series. With music and lyrics by Ron Romanovsky and Paul Phillips. (45th Street Theatre, 354 W. 45th St. 279-4200.)

THE JUDAS KISS—Liam Neeson and Tom Hollander star in David Hare's play about Oscar Wilde and his lover Sir Alfred (Bosie) Douglas. Wilde's libel suit against Douglas's father, the Marquess of Queensberry, has just failed, but Douglas talks Wilde out of fleeing England and, thus, out of escaping prosecution for homosexual acts. Hare uses irony to good effect—practically every character in the play except Wilde is having sex—but an emotional charge is missing. Neeson's Oscar doesn't seem needy enough for us to understand his devotion to Hollander's petulant, spoiled Bosie, and sparks don't exactly fly between the two actors. Richard Eyre directed this Almeida

Theatre Company production. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200. Closes Aug. 1.)

MISS COCO PERU'S LIQUID UNIVERSE—A heartfelt series of how-I-got-this-way vignettes written and performed by Miss Coco Peru, otherwise known as Clinton Leupp. The show is occasionally syrupy, and Miss Coco should have given herself more opportunities to show off her terrific singing voice, but her self-aware and self-lacerating humor and her engaging way with a story make this a winning evening. The well-paced direction is by Charles Randolph Wright. Sundays at 8. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0391.)

JONATHAN ROSEN

A NEW BRAIN—Malcolm Gets is a songwriter awaiting surgery, in a new musical by William Finn ("Falsettos") and James Lapine. Graciela Daniele is the director. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

NO STRINGS ATTACHED, PART TWO: MIND ATTACK!—Todo con Nada's Richard Foreman retrospective returns; this year's lineup includes four plays never produced in the United States: "Classical Therapy (or) a Week Under the Influence," "Book of Splendors: Part One," "Café Amerique," and "Georges Bataille's Bathrobe." (NADA, 167 Ludlow St., south of Houston St. For tickets and schedule information, call 330-6876. Closes Aug. 1.)

NUNSENSE A-MEN—An all-male version of Dan Goggin's 1985 musical comedy, "Nunsense." (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

OTHELLO—The second production in Expanded Arts' summer season of Free Shakespeare in the Park(ing) Lot. (Broome and Ludlow Sts. 253-1813. Closes Aug. 1.)

PLAYSTATION, LEVELS 1-4—Judy Elkan's comedy examines the days and nights of three downtown glamour girls. (Excellent Art Manufacturing, 86 Forsyth St. 414-5167.)

POWER PLAYS—Three short plays, two written by Elaine May and one by Alan Arkin, who perform them with Jeannie Berlin and Anthony Arkin, their respective offspring. May's writing and acting are, almost literally, insanely funny, and she and Arkin are a great match. (They're both long-ago Second City alums.) All three of the plays are too long, but the comic brilliance of May and Arkin père (who also directed) is worth, at a rough estimate, ten million times the price of admission. Presented by Manhattan Theatre Club. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

THE RACE OF THE ARK TATTOO—A site-specific memory play by W. David Hancock, set amid dozens of cast-off flea-market items in P.S. 122's tiny gallery space. Tchotchkes chosen by the audience at each performance determine, in part, the story that gets told that night. A deep sense of loss pervades the basic plot, which concerns a foster parent on Cape Cod and one of the kids in his care. Although elliptical and discursive by its very nature, Hancock's drama, performed by Matthew Maher, is oddly affecting. Co-staged with the Foundry Theatre. (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Closes Aug. 2.)

RAGTIME—E. L. Doctorow's epic novel is transformed into a historical pageant. It's a big, brave, passionate gamble, masterfully directed by Frank Galati. (2/2/98) (Ford Center for the Performing Arts, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.)

SAKINA'S RESTAURANT—Aasif Mandvi portrays six characters in his one-man exploration of the South Asian community in New York. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200. Closes Aug. 2.)

SIDE MAN—The Roundabout Theatre presents Warren Leight's drama, which was staged earlier this year Off Broadway. It's a nostalgic but never sappy paean to the musical obsession and worldly indifference of mid-century big-band musicians, cleverly structured as the recollections of one musician's put-upon son. Though the play gives short shrift to the characters, it invites the audience into the musicians' world, and the cast is good enough to make it come alive. Solidly directed by Michael Mayer. (Broadway at 45th St. 719-1300.)

SMOKE ON THE MOUNTAIN—On a Saturday night in June, 1938, the Mount Pleasant (North Carolina) Baptist Church awaits the arrival of the Sanders Family singers and musicians, who are as unpredictable as the Renfro kin in Eudora Welty's "Losing Battles": there's no telling what they'll do when you get 'em all together. This sweet and funny musical comedy, which first played here eight years ago, features Mike Craver and Mark Hardwick's tuneful, often bluegrass-style arrangements of songs like "Bringing in the Sheaves," "I'll Fly Away," and "Rock of Ages." Alan Bailey conceived and di-

rected the show, which was written by Connie Ray. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)

THE SOUND OF MUSIC—Rebecca Luker is enormously winning as Maria, and the seven children in the cast are mostly delightful, but the production doesn't linger in the memory; there may be music in those hills, but the producers didn't seem to find a whole lot of fresh air up there. (4/6/98) (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

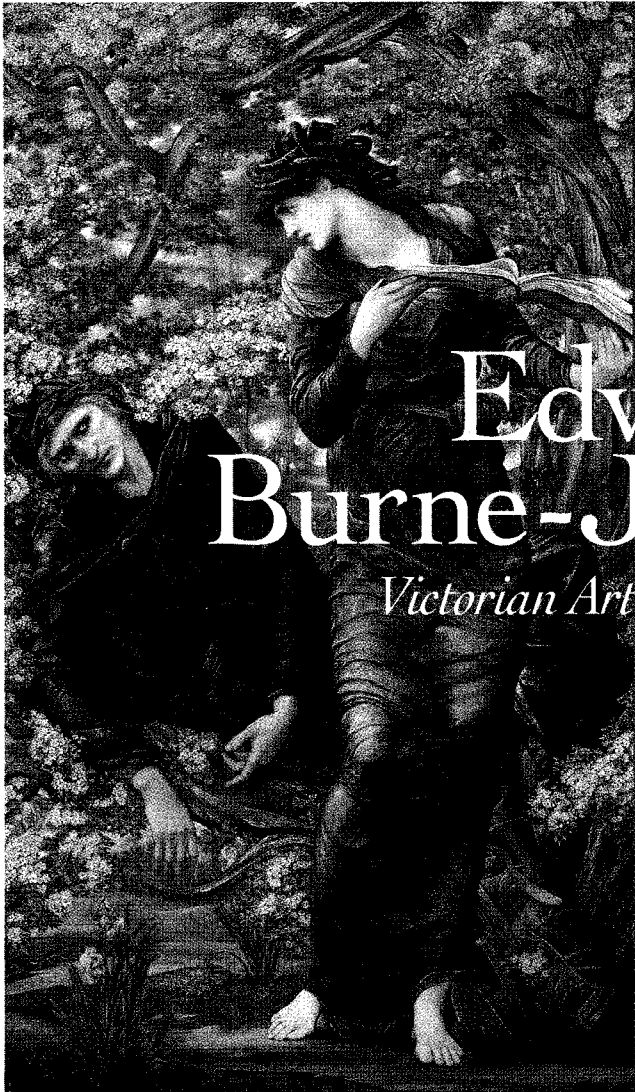
SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE—Abstract puppets underwater, set to the music of Berlioz. This isn't rubber-duckie performance art; just as dance can make space a palpable presence onstage, the show's creator, Basil Twist, uses feathers, streamers, mirrors, bubbles, and sophisticated lighting to do the same for water. And, as in dance, the movement illuminates the music. A peerless, delightful summer evening. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202.)

TWELFTH NIGHT—Get thee to Lincoln Center, for Nicholas Hytner's absolutely magical staging of Shakespeare's comedy. To sin-

gle out any one member of the cast—which includes Philip Bosco, Helen Hunt, David Patrick Kelly, Brian Murray, Paul Rudd, Kyra Sedgwick, and Max Wright—for praise would be wrong, and criticism would seem like nit-picking in the face of so much fun. The only real crime committed is the traditional curtain call: much of the applause is for the extraordinary work of Bob Crowley (sets), Natasha Katz (lighting), Catherine Zuber (costumes), Jeanine Tesori (music), and Scott Stauffer (sound), none of whom are there to take a bow. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE—The Roundabout Theatre's excellent revival of Arthur Miller's tragic story of the longshoreman Eddie Carbone and his obsession with his orphaned niece. (1/5/98) (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

VILLA VILLA—Theatre as mosh pit. The Argentinean troupe De La Guarda herds you into a crowded space, performs undistinguished rock music, swings on ropes over your head,



Now through
September 6

Edward Burne-Jones

Victorian Artist-Dreamer

Medieval legends, fairy tales, and mythological lore abound in the first American retrospective of British painter and designer Edward Burne-Jones. Some 170 objects—visual flights of fancy that made this great Pre-Raphaelite master one of the most celebrated artists of the 19th century.

The exhibition has been organized by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, England, and the Réunion des musées nationaux/Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Edward Burne-Jones
The Beguiling of Merlin (detail)
1874. Board of Trustees,
National Museums and Galleries
on Merseyside, Liverpool,
England and the Lewis Art
Gallery, Fort Southwick.

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and splashes you until you're drenched. It's an extraordinarily loud and transgressive show, with no point, it seems, beyond proving the troupe's mastery of the carabiner. (Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200.)

YOU NEVER CAN TELL—A summer treat from the Roundabout Theatre Company. In Shaw's early comedy, a young dentist (the wry and handsome Robert Sean Leonard) tries to romantically outwit an ostensibly modern turn-of-the-century woman (Katie Finneran) but ends up succumbing to her inherently old-fashioned ways. Allen Meyer's seaside-resort set is lovely, as are Michael Krass's costumes, and the cast is super. It would have been a better day at the beach, though, had the director, Nicholas Martin, toned down Catherine Kellner and Saxon Palmer, whose precocious-siblings act seems more suited to Looney Tunes. (Broadway at 45th St. 719-1300.)

YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE TOLD—A drama about an urban, middle-class black family touched by sexual abuse, written by Anne L. Thompson-Scretching. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

LONG RUNS

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES**: Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **BRING IN DA NOISE, BRING IN DA FUNK**: Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS**: Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CHICAGO**: Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS**: Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY STRIKES BACK!**: Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200. . . . **GROSS INDECENCY: THE THREE TRIALS OF OSCAR WILDE**: Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000. . . . **HOWARD CRABTREE'S WHEN PIGS FLY**: Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. . . . **I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE**: Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **JEKYLL & HYDE**: Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **LATE NITE CATECHISM**: St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE LION KING**: New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES**: Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON**: Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME**: Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA**: Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **R & J**: John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 354-2220. . . . **RENT**: Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL**: Miniskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. . . . **SECRETS EVERY SMART TRAVELER SHOULD KNOW**: Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ**: Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP**: Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **TITANIC**: Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING**: St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 239-6200. . . . **VISITING MR. GREEN**: Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 505-0700.



DANCE

PILOBOLUS—The final performances of the summer engagement. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. July 20-24 at 8 and July 25 at 2 and 8.)

NOCHE FLAMENCA—The premier flamenco ensemble returns to work up a sweat in its downtown stomping grounds. (Theatre 80, at 80 St. Marks Pl. 279-4200. July 22-25 and July 28 at 8 and July 26 at 3. Through Aug. 15.)

SAVION GLOVER/DOWNTOWN—The John Coltrane of tap and his tight crew of tappers, along with a loose-limbed jazz quartet and surprise guests, end their return visit. (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200. July 20-24 at 8 and July 25 at 6 and 10.)

DANCES FOR WAVE HILL—David Alan Harris turns students from the Riverdale Neighborhood House into dancers for the premiere of "And She's Like 'Opening Day,'" a full-length work the choreographer touts as a mix of pageant and ecological experiment. (Wave Hill, 249th St. at Independence Ave., the Bronx. For information, call 718-549-3200. July 22 at 6:30 and July 26 at 5.)

CENTRAL PARK SUMMER-STAGE—A split bill: Zvi Gotheiner & Dancers remount "Oh, Moon of Alabama" and premiere "Dust," a commissioned piece that honors the fiftieth anniversary of the state of Israel; and Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company performs "Movable Figures," "In the Bamboo Forest," and other works. (Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. July 22 at 8:30. No tickets necessary.)

OUT OF TOWN

JACOB'S PILLOW DANCE FESTIVAL—July 21-23 at 8, July 24 at 8:30, and July 25 at 2 and 8:30: Miami City Ballet. . . . July 23-24 at 8:15 and July 25-26 at 5: Meredith Monk/The House. (Becket, Mass. For information about tickets, call 413-243-0745.)

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

"JAZZ IN JULY"—The 92nd Street Y's annual summer series. July 22: "1937—When Swing Was King." To remind us that the Swing Era was made of more than just big bands and Hollywood extravaganzas, some of our finest mainstream players—such as Dick Hyman, Harry Allen, Bucky Pizzarelli, Warren Vaché, and Ken Peplowski—team up here in modest ensembles and attempt to recapture the glory of small-group swing. The repertoire will revisit the golden chestnuts of the thirties and forties. . . . July 23: "Three Piano Crossover." A triumvirate of elegant pianists—Marian McPartland, Dick Hyman, and Ruth Laredo—uphold the finer virtues of jazz keyboard styling. . . . July 28: "Licorice Sh_ticks." Benny Goodman and Pee Wee Russell would have been beside themselves at this monumental gathering of clarinet players. Three heavyweight champions of the straight horn—Kenny Davern, Walt Levinsky, and Ken Peplowski—are joined by fellow-clarinetists Danny Bank, Dan Levinson, Ray Beckenstein, and Allan Vaché, along with pianist Dick Hyman, gui-

tarist Howard Alden, and others. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. All concerts begin at 8.)

"MAMALOSHEN"—The singer-actor Mandy Patinkin performs a selection of Yiddish songs, accompanied by violinist Saeka Matsuyama and pianist Eric Stern. (Angel Orensanz Foundation Center for the Arts, 172 Norfolk St., at E. Houston St. 431-8102. July 22-25 at 8 and July 22 and July 25 at 2. Through Aug. 22.)

JOHN PIZZARELLI—Jazz guitarist and vocalist Pizzarelli is an agile musician and a pleasant low-key crooner from the Chet Baker/Alfalfa school. (Castle Clinton, Battery Park. July 23 at 7. Free tickets, which are required, will be distributed at 5.)

"CELEBRATE BROOKLYN!"—July 24 at 7:30: The electrifying Celtic supergroup Altan. (Prospect Park Bandshell, Prospect Park W. at 9th St., Brooklyn. No tickets necessary.)

STEVE MILLER BAND/LITTLE FEAT—He's a joker, he's a smoker, he's a midnight toker, and he's the walking definition of "classic rock." Since the death of Lowell George, in 1979, this band has been a shadow of its former glorious self, but the remaining members still know how to make chicken-fried boogie. (Jones Beach Theatre. 516-221-1000. July 24 at 7:30.)

BR5-49—A high-power hep cat quintet from Nashville which mixes frenetic covers of rockabilly and country-and-Western classics with its own time-warping originals. With Johnny Paycheck. (Central Park Summer-Stage, Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. July 25 at 3. No tickets necessary.)

MIDSUMMER NIGHT SWING—Lincoln Center's annual dance-under-the-stars festival. July 25: Illinois Jacquet, the tenor saxophonist, best known for his sumptuous sound and for his smooth, Basie-like band. (The Plaza, Lincoln Center. Tickets available at the entrance. Shows begin at 8:15; dance lessons begin at 6:30.)

MICHAEL CRAWFORD—The erstwhile phantom of the opera haunts the beach for a change. (Jones Beach Theatre. July 25 at 8.)

TSUNAMI MUSIC FESTIVAL—Featuring Lower East Side indie-rock bands. July 28, beginning at 5: Speedball Baby, the Gunga Din, and White Hassle. (Central Park Band Shell, mid-Park at 72nd St. Through Aug. 25.)

TORI AMOS—The self-dramatizing singer and pianist may be over the top, but she's rarely a bore. (Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. July 28 at 8.)

BUDDY GUY/JOHNNY LANG—Buddy Guy is a gentleman guitarist who's finally getting his due. Both his 1991 commercial breakthrough album and his 1993 autobiography were called "Damn Right I've Got the Blues." He gives as good as he's got: his feral and frenetic licks provide a most emphatic experience. With the teen-age blues-guitar sensation Lang, who himself has licks to spare. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 564-4882. July 28 at 8.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

BIRDLAND, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—July 23-25: **THE JIMMY HEATH** quintet. To watch saxophonist Heath at work is to observe the mind-body split in action: while standing stock-still, his face an inscrutable mask, he extracts gorgeous melodies and heartbreaking tones from his horns. July 26: **THE CHICO O'FARRILL AFRO-CUBAN JAZZ BIG BAND**. July 27: **THE TOSHIKO AKIYOSHI JAZZ ORCHESTRA**. July 28: **THE FAMOUS DUKE ELLINGTON ORCHESTRA**. Dining.

BLUE NOTE, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Vocalist **REGINA BELLE** is in through July 26. Dining.

CARLYLE HOTEL, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and, through July 27, singer and pianist **EARL**

DANIEL MAVA

ROSE. . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, PETER MINTUN begins a two-month stay July 28. CITRON 47, at 401 W. 47th St. (397-4747)—A comfy living-room bistro in Hell's Kitchen. The CHUCK WILSON quartet is out to show that Monday nights aren't just for big bands. Swing saxophonist Wilson's chamber-jazz foursome includes guitarist HOWARD ALDEN, a master of pre-bop idioms, trombonist JOEL HELLENY, and bassist MURRAY WALL. The Brazilian percussionist CAFE leads his own eclectic group on Tuesdays. Dining.

CLEOPATRA'S NEEDLE, Broadway at 92nd St. (769-6969)—MARC COPLAND, a sterling pianist whose recordings with bass and drums display his sensitive touch and acute harmonic perspective, revels in that tried-and-true setting, with alternating players, Mondays through the end of the year.

FIREBIRD CAFE, 363 W. 46th St. (586-0244)—Pianist and singer STEVE ROSS has extended his show of Cole Porter tunes through Aug. 1.

IRIDIUM, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—July 23-26: The JIMMY SMITH trio. The wave of Hammond organists which has followed in the massive wake of Mr. Smith has yet to swamp him: no one can make the instrument purr and scream quite like he can. He's a sophisticated funkster who can turn a concert hall into a roadhouse and a club into a temple of the blues. Mondays belong to electric-guitar innovator LES PAUL. Dining.

JAZZ STANDARD, 116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—The DAVID (FATHEAD) NEWMAN quartet is in through July 25. Strong support in the way of pianist JOHN HICKS, bassist STEVE NOYASEL, and drummer AL FOSTER will give Newman, a founding father of blues-drenched funk-jazz saxophone, a firm foundation for stretching out.

KNICKERBOCKER, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—An Old New York kind of place, with dark wood panelling, white tablecloths, and brass figurine lamps. PETE MALINVERNI (in through July 25), along with pianists like Michael Weiss and Mike LeDonne, belongs to a New York substratum of reliable and utterly indispensable performers who play their bop with a touch of grassroots swing. He's joined here by bassist JOEL FORBES.

RAINBOW & STARS, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—A plush, Art Deco shrine, sixty-five floors above it all, complete with a panoramic view as dizzying as the tab. Up now: "I Love New York," a revue featuring Bryan Batt, Lewis Cleale, Heather Mac Rae, and Janet Metz. Through July 26. . . .

¶ Across the hall, in the Rainbow Room, there's a revolving dance floor, plus swinging big-band music courtesy of the Rainbow Room Orchestra, featuring vocalists Sean Mahony and Hilary Kole. Closed Mondays.

SWEET BASIL, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—A convivial and crowded jazz club where the musicians are always top-shelf. Through July 26: Now working from a wheelchair, the former Count Basie trombonist AL GREY can still summon up everything he needs to swing. His quintet here includes a second trombonist, WYCLIFFE GORDON, guitarist JOE COHN, pianist HENRY BUTLER, and the effervescent drummer BOBBY DURHAM. Dining.

TONIC, 107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—July 24: RAVI COLTRANE, John's son, didn't make life easy for himself by taking up the tenor and soprano saxophones. But his recent major-label debut recording, "Moving Pictures," has laid all doubts to rest. Coltrane leaves the excess verbiage to the army of players who are still misconstruing his father's message, and instead pares down well-wrought phrases for maximum effect and exalts in a gleaming tone. July 26: A vital presence on the scene, bassist WILLIAM PARKER is a thinker as well as a bruising instrumentalist.

VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through July 26: The WINARD HARPER quintet. Harper was the drum-playing sibling in the Harper Brothers, one of the first neo-traditional jazz bands to gain attention. Now a veteran, he's decked out his own band with such ardent players as saxophonist DON BRADEN, trumpeter PATRICK RICKMAN, and bassist RICHIE GOODS. The always

reliable GEORGE CABLES holds down the piano chair. The VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA holds sway on Mondays.

ZINNO, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—A rarity among jazz clubs: somewhere you'd go to eat even if there were no music. July 22-25: Trombonists bred in big bands the way BENNY POWELL was aren't to be taken lightly. Having come up with Count Basie, Powell knows the value of clarity and the majestic force of the blues. He's supported by the pleasing mainstream pianist JANE JARVIS and the venerable bassist EARL MAY.

ROCK ETC.

BOTTOM LINE, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—July 23: Mandolin virtuoso SAM BUSH performs with his band. July 24: A-cappella pop music with THE BOBS. July 28: The duo PARLOIR JAMES makes country blues with a light techno veneer; the New Englander CHERI KNIGHT makes well-crafted country songs.

BOWERY BALLROOM, 6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Supercool electronica combo FAT BOY SLIM presents an evening of groovy bells and whistles.

CHICAGO B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—July 23: JAMES COTTON. There are only a few world-class blues-harmonica players, and Cotton is one of the finest. Tutored as a teen-ager by the legendary Sonny Boy Williamson II, he made his first recording for Sam Phillips's Sun Records in 1953 (as a member of Howlin' Wolf's band) and spent more than a decade as Muddy Waters' harp player during the golden age of Chicago blues. After all these years, he still has his chops. July 25: Singer SHEMEKIA COPELAND, daughter of the late singer and guitarist Johnny (Clyde) Copeland.

IRVING PLAZA, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—July 22: NEIL FINN. Back in the eighties, Chris Difford and Glenn Tilbrook

of Squeeze were often referred to as the Lennon and McCartney of New Wave. But an argument could be made that the best pure pop of the era belonged to the songwriting talents of Neil and Tim Finn of the New Zealand band Split Enz. After the band broke up, Neil, the younger brother, enjoyed a brief stretch of success with Crowded House. Now, as a solo artist, he brings an easy gift for melodies and a subterranean vein of bile to his fine new album, "Try Whistling This." With the lovely Swedish folk-rock chanteuse EBBA FORSBERG, whose Lilith-friendly debut, "Been There," is one of the year's best. . . . ¶ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday. The dancers share a passion for the Lindy Hop, a dance that involves a lot of whirling and the occasional display of underwear. Sets from eight until midnight. For information on the society, call 696-9737.

KNITTING FACTORY, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—July 22: Postmodern guitar hero DAVID TORN, recently sidelined by a long illness, returns to the six-string pantheon. July 24: Woodstock legend RICHIE HAVENS heats up the stage. July 25-26: ME'SHELL NDEGÉCELLO, a seventies-channelling dynamo whose songs are always in the key of life: she elegantly fuses R. & B., funk, and pop the way Stevie Wonder used to.

LES POULETS, 16 W. 22nd St. (229-2000)—The name may be French, but the music here is Latin: expect salsa, merengue, and the occasional cha-cha. Dining.

S.O.B.'s, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A great grass hut with a fruit-and-bamboo motif, dedicated to calypso, reggae, and the bossa nova. July 22: The ROYAL DRUMMERS OF AFRICA, with Senegalese percussionist DOUDOU N'DIAYE ROSE. July 23: Classic funk with the AVERAGE WHITE BAND. Dining.

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"The usual, sir?"



PAULANER BIER
Munich's First Family Of Beers



The Bowery Ballroom, a new, split-level haven for music on the Lower East Side.

WETLANDS, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—July 21-24: Indie pop with the Canadian outfit **THE TRAGICALLY HIP**. July 27: **LAURA LOVE**. Imagine the melodies of Irish music riding atop the busy rhythms of funk and jazz, and you'll have some idea of the sound that this talented bass-playing singer-songwriter calls "Afro-Celtic." July 28: Master African drummer **BABATUNDE OLATUNJI** brings his inspired ten-piece ensemble in for the evening.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—"Ellsworth Kelly on the Roof." The only problem with the sculpture garden on the roof of the Met is that the works are pitted against one of the most magnificent feats of construction in the world—the Manhattan skyline. But the soaring trapezoids and hovering arcs of Kelly's sculptures—sparse, uninflected, and resolutely planar—elegantly hold their own. The main subject here seems to be the sky, which on a clear, crisp day is tinted a Kelly blue. Three of the five pieces on display (through late fall) are recent works that have never before been exhibited publicly. . . . The French designer Jean Dunand (1877-1942) richly deserves the moniker the Met has bestowed on him in this mini-retrospective: "Master of Art Deco." When F. Scott Fitzgerald said wistfully that he loved the world when it twinkles, he might have been thinking of Dunand's stunning screens created for the salon of Solomon Guggenheim depicting angels falling from Heaven, in gilt lacquer speckled with mother-of-pearl and eggshell. The bedroom suite (in silver-and-black lacquer and furry goatskin) that he designed for railroad heir Templeton Crocker's penthouse apartment in San Francisco is the real-life prototype of all those swanky interiors that Fred Astaire and Norma Shearer swivelled through in the palmy days before anyone knew that there was such a thing as camp. Through Oct. 25. . . . "Edward Burne-Jones: Victorian Artist-Dreamer," a splendid survey devoted to this preeminent Pre-Raphaelite, includes paintings, works on paper, books, stained glass, and tapestries that Burne-Jones executed in collaboration with his friend William Morris. Through Sept. 6. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—For seemingly arbitrary reasons, Pierre Bonnard's genius has been reflexively measured against Picasso's, and found wanting. Proust, however, is closer to home, and this exquisite retrospective—the first here in thirty-four years—shows why: both the

painter and the novelist turned the surface shimmer of bourgeois contentment into mysterious evocations of memory. Particularly moving are the four large canvases of Bonnard's wife, Marthe, in her bath. Nothing could be further from Picasso's *Georgie-Porgie* crying women than these sad and sweetly devoted portraits. Through Oct. 13. (See also Galleries—Uptown.) . . . "Love Forever: Yayoi Kusama, 1958-68." Through Sept. 22. . . . "Tony Smith: Architect, Painter, Sculptor." Through Sept. 22. . . . The impressive retrospective of the career of Aleksandr Rodchenko (1891-1956) is valuable as much for its insights into the rise and decline of the Russian Revolution as for its art-historical contribution. A leader of the avant-garde in the twenties, Rodchenko was a founder of Constructivism, an early—and very witty—practitioner of photomontage, and a brilliant graphic designer. The works here from the teens and early twenties radiate a purist's idealism, which is just as evident in the letterhead design for the new state airline as it is in the artist's pristine black-on-black and white-on-white abstractions. Photomontage led to photojournalism; Rodchenko's grainy, eerily composed shots of daily life and work in Moscow are rich in ironies, political as well as artistic. The most moving document in the show is his 1933 magazine photo essay about the building of a canal, which purports to show the intrinsic heroism of hard work. In fact, it depicts the first of Stalin's gulags, in which some two hundred thousand people died. Through Oct. 6. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 6; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:30.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—It would be easy to dismiss the Danish painter Wilhelm Hammershøi (1864-1916) as a reactionary purveyor of genre scenes: the echoes of Vermeer and de Hooch in his gray, deserted street scenes and empty room interiors are all too obvious. Yet as traditional as his themes may be, Hammershøi is very much a man of his time. A chilly, completely bare interior of an elegant baroque palace hall (1909) speaks of the despair and alienation of the early twentieth century as powerfully as the works of Hammershøi's revolutionary contemporaries in Paris expressed the era's idealism. The claims that this exhibition is a rediscovery of "the Danish Vermeer" are absurd and inadvertently damning: a Kierkegaard of the canvas is more like it. Through Sept. 7. . . . "The Art of the Motorcycle," a dazzling collection of one hundred and eleven bikes, from the late nineteenth century to the present. The installation, designed by Frank Gehry, is itself a work of art: the architect has faced the ramps of the rotunda with stainless steel, giving a hallucinatory shimmer to

Frank Lloyd Wright's masterpiece. The show might be summarized in one word: *bitchin'*. Through Sept. 20. . . . "Peggy Guggenheim: A Centennial Celebration." The hundredth-birthday fête of the compulsive collector of the mid-century avant-garde is distinctly archeological, using letters, guestbooks, photographs, and even a few art works to cast her as one of high society's last pharaohs: her reconstructed bedchamber is done in its original shade of turquoise, and features a reliquary filled with scores of earrings designed by the likes of Alexander Calder. Through Sept. 2. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM SoHo, 575 Broadway, at Prince St. (423-3500)—Six finalists for the Hugo Boss Prize—Douglas Gordon, Huang Yong Ping, William Kentridge, Lee Bul, Pipilotti Rist, and Lorna Simpson—await the announcement of the winner, later this month. In the meantime, museumgoers may judge for themselves. Through Sept. 20. . . . "Four video installations ('Bronx,' 'Roma,' 'Liquid Crystals,' and 'Baroque Catholic Movements') by the Venetian artist Fabrizio Plessi. Through Sept. 13. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—A mid-career retrospective of Charles Ray, one of the most discreet yet powerful artists to emerge from the raucous L.A. art scene. The show emphasizes Ray's work as a sculptor, from early sendups of Minimalism (a hollow black cube filled to the brim with printer's ink) to his more recent business with oversized department-store mannequins. There are also a number of compelling photo-Conceptualist pieces, such as "All My Clothes," a series of snapshots documenting the artist wearing, yes, every item in his wardrobe. One of the nicest things about the Ray show is its apparent modesty: only twenty-some works have been included, but they have been installed so that each one is allotted maximum breathing space, occasionally one per room. This is a welcome change from the average show by a living artist, which can be overcrowded with similar works. Through Aug. 30. . . . "Unknown Terrain: The Landscapes of Andrew Wyeth." The one revelation in this survey of sixty years' worth of landscapes is that the artist has apparently *chosen*, from a range of manners he was proficient in, his distinctive style of brittle realism. The show includes a lovely and loose-limbed series of watercolors from the late thirties and early forties, depicting the Maine shoreline with a mellifluous palette of reds and greens, as well as one still-life, "Sculpin," which feels positively Japanese. Through Aug. 30. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"Masters of Color and Light: Homer, Sargent, and the American Watercolor Movement" showcases more than a hundred and fifty works from the museum's extensive collection. Through Aug. 23. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays, 11 to 9; and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

FRICK COLLECTION, 1 E. 70th St. (288-0700)—The Winterstein Collection, a private holding of drawings and watercolors which spans the years 1750 to 1850 (or, the Age of Goethe), is a grab bag of landscapes, allegorical scenes, and portraits, many of them studies for larger works, and all palpably overshadowed by the last great era of German draftsmanship some three centuries before (the Age of Albrecht Dürer). Most compelling here are the oddballs, among them a light-flooded convent by Caspar David Friedrich (ca. 1835) and a winsome 1815 self-portrait by the young Johann von Leonhardsoff, entitled "Pretty Miserable" (he was suffering from tuberculosis at the time). Through Aug. 30. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

MORGAN LIBRARY, 29 E. 36th St. (685-0008)—"a.k.a. Lewis Carroll" presents personal memorabilia (drawn primarily from the museum's Arthur A. Houghton, Jr., collection) relating to the life and work of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (1832-98), including early editions of "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland," examples of his highly regarded albumen photographs (including several of young Alice Liddell, the model for his fictional heroine), his correspondence and scholarly pamphlets, and assorted merchandise (Victorian biscuit tins, plaster Cheshire Cats) based on his fantasia. Through Aug. 3. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10:30 to 5; Saturdays, 10:30 to 6; Sundays, noon to 6.)

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN, 1 Bowling Green (668-6624)—"Indian Humor," an exhibition of paintings and sculptures that counter the stoic stereotype, includes Choctaw Marcus Amerman's "Iron Horse Jacket," a leather biker jacket with a beaded image of Brooke Shields in a bikini; Blackfoot Ernie Pepion's "Manifest Dysentery," a disposable diaper taped to moss; Caughnawaga Mohawk Richard Glazer-Danay's "Fry Bread Freda" and "Fry Bread Fred," a pair of painted upside-down bowls; and Hupa and Yurok George Blake's "D.C. Redneck," a ceramic football helmet that displays the profile of a bald and badly shaven blond man. Through Aug. 2. (Open daily, 10 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. (869-8089)—"A War in Perspective, 1898-1998: Public Appeals, Memory, and the Spanish-American Conflict" examines the clashing ideologies and the divergent aftermaths for two world powers. Salomon Room; through Aug. 29. (Open Mondays, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Summer hours: unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

"AMERICAN MASTERS"—Work by Thomas Hart Benton, Marsden Hartley, Reginald Marsh, and other New Deal-era stalwarts. Through Aug. 8. (MB Modern, 41 E. 57th St. 371-3444.)

"FOOD FOR THOUGHT"—Art about comestibles, by Milton Avery, Isabel Bishop, Roz Chast, Janet Fish, Jacob Lawrence, and Wayne Thiebaud, among others. Through Aug. 12. (DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 247-2111.)

"No!ART SHOW No. 3"—The Gat gallery shows a key work of early rebarbativism, Boris Lurie's nineteen-foot mural, "Dismembered Women: Combat on Rooftop" (1951), alongside archival material about other works of pioneering vulgarity. Through Sept. 30. (1100 Madison Ave., at 82nd St. 327-0441.)

"PAINTING IN PROVINCETOWN"—Works by two outdoor abstractionists (Hans Hofmann and Jack Tworckov) and their gently figura-

tive friend Milton Avery. Through July 31. (Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St. 752-0124.)

"THE SIXTIES IN THE SEVENTIES"—Performance, Pop, and Minimalist work by big-timers (Art-schwager, Dine, Johns, Judd, Lichtenstein, Oldenburg, Warhol, and cohorts) who were still tousled sprats in the sixties, when they all showed in galleries in the East Seventies. Through July 24. (Ubu, 16 E. 78th St. 794-4444.)

SHORT LIST—WOODROW BLAGG, ACA, 41 E. 57th St. 644-8300. Through July 25. . . . **PIERRE BONNARD**, Wildenstein, 19 E. 64th St. 879-0500. Through Oct. 10. . . . **JOAN BROWN**, Adams, 41 W. 57th St. 644-5665. Through Aug. 14. . . . **JAMES D. BUTLER**, Forum, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 355-4545. Through July 24. . . . **SHIRLEY GOLDFARB**, Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 752-1223. Through Sept. 4. . . . **YAYOI KUSAMA** and **ROBERT FILLIOU**, Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. 980-5454. Both shows through Aug. 7. . . . **SHARI MENDELSON**, St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 935-2200. Through Aug. 24. . . . **ANNE RYAN**, Washburn, 20 W. 57th St. 397-6780. Through July 31.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

"BATHROOM"—A large, ambitious, and generally satisfying group show dedicated to that most humble yet essential of household and institutional rooms. Curated by Wayne Koestenbaum, who wrote "The Queen's Throat" and "Jackie Under My Skin," the show assembles works by the famous (Andy Warhol, Alice Neel, Robert Mapplethorpe) as well as the young and relatively obscure. Among the highlights of the latter group: Chivas Clem and Claude Wampler's "Frank Hole (Gloria Sinatra)," a viciously funny video sendup of the late singer in which the two artists visited a university glory hole and took turns poking their tongues through an orifice in a glossy photo of Ol' Blue Eyes.

Lurid, disrespectful, unforgettable. Through Aug. 7. (Healy, 530 W. 22nd St. 243-3753.)

"PAINTING: NOW AND FOREVER, PART I"—In their attempt to summarize thirty-odd years of painterly practice, joint exhibitions at the Marks and Hearn galleries emphasize the present—the now within forever. Examples of sixties color-field painting (such as a stunning Kenneth Noland target painting) reinforce recent tendencies toward a new psychedelic opticality (e.g., works by Franz Ackermann, Michael Bevilacqua, and Lisa Ruyter, among others). The painterly gesture also gets its turn on the stage, both historically (an elegant Brice Marden stands out) and among younger artists (the swirling rings of Keith Mayerson's picture). Camp has its moments—notably Suzy Spence's deliciously tacky picture of "Beverly Hills 90210" star Tori Spelling floating in a pool, smiling vacantly. And there is no lack of the unusual: Warhol's "piss," or oxidation, paintings are well known enough, but who before now was privy to his set of small "come paintings," executed in gesso and semen? Through July 31. (Marks, 522 W. 22nd St., 243-0200; and Hearn, 530 W. 22nd St., 727-7366.)

"SMALL PAINTINGS"—Niche work, if you can get it, by Ingo Meller, Richmond Burton, Joan Mitchell, Juan Usle, and others. Through Aug. 28. (Cheim & Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727.)

SHORT LIST—YINNIE ANGEL, Kravets/Wehby, 529 W. 21st St. 352-2238. Through Aug. 28. . . . **DEBORAH BROWN**, Morthland, 225 Tenth Ave., at 23rd St. 242-7767. Open Sundays, noon to 5; through July 31. . . . **JONATHAN HOROWITZ**, Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. 463-7770. Through July 31. . . . **CHARLES LONG**, Bonakdar Jancou, 521 W. 21st St. 414-4144. Through July 24. . . . **H. N. SEMJON**, Au Base, 433 W. 14th St. 414-0563. Through July 31. . . . **JENNY WATSON**, Nosei, 530 W. 22nd St. 741-8695. Through Aug. 14.

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GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

"CONTEMPORARY SELF-PORTRAITS"—These self-portraits, from many countries, show a lack of narcissism that's remarkable in this age of unbidden memoirs. The young English collective Gob Squad produces QVC-style video adverts, with all the members rattling off their mundane talents and the prices they're offering them for. Dutch artist Vibeke Tandberg sends up photography's current fad for vérité family albums with her series of computerized snapshots in which she becomes her own twin; the faux Kodak moments are nonetheless touching. Through July 24. (Sean Kelly, 43 Mercer St. 343-2405.)

"DRAWING TO AN END"—Drawings created in series in order to refine ideas, by Don Doe, Sean Mellyn, Jennifer Monick, and others. Through July 24. (Kustera, 41 Wooster St. 965-1527.)

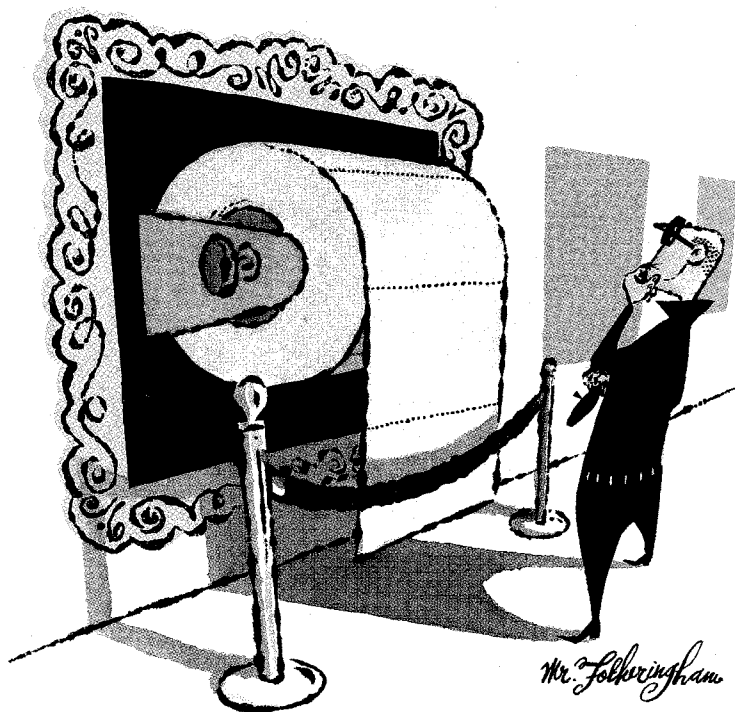
"GROUND CONTROL"—Now that John Glenn and Major Tom are both members of the Geritol generation, the younger set tends to consider the golden years of space exploration as they do the British Invasion: as an interesting anachronism from a less fraught time. The most stirring images in this show of space art (from

tectural legacy of Moderne homeboys Neutra and Schindler; and Chris Finley's tableaux of bodybuilders and pizzas refer to his nearly pathological sculpture (legendary in L.A., but hardly seen in New York). Through July 31. (Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300.)

"PEEP SHOW"—A scattershot group show of art about sex, the body, and looking. No great curatorial insights here, but some real finds: a Robert Colescott watercolor, a few of David Salle's underappreciated photographs, a Hopper etching, and two of Eugene von Bruenchenhein's touching (and retouched) forties-era photos of his wife in stripper attire. Even better are cheek-burningly erotic Japanese and Indian prints from centuries past—historically shagadelic, baby. Through July 24. (Ross, 568 Broadway. 343-2161.)

"PETS"—Portraits and fantasias ("Fancy Pet," "Pet Grotesque," "Senior Pet," etc.) that artists have done of their animal companions. Through Aug. 13. (Keenan, 3 Crosby St. 431-5083.)

GROUP SHOW—Feature remains one of the few SoHo galleries that can put together a surprising, eclectic summer bill of fare. The current group includes German painter Jochen Klein, whose work falls in



Bathroom-themed art, both tasteful and not, at Healy.

straight science to cosmic comics) are the Apollo-era photos of the moon and Earth taken from a lunar-landing craft—painstakingly assembled panoramas from an age of unfettered optimism. Through July 31. (Lombard Freid, 470 Broome St. 334-5060.)

"MAPS"—Art cartography, including "Dymaxion Air-Ocean World Map," the first distortion-free plotting of the earth's surface, by Buckminster Fuller; "Mappa del Mondo," a map with the countries filled in with embroidered flags, by Alighiero e Boetti; and James Turrell's "Roden Crater, Cartoons for the Fresco," a plan for the artist's giant earthwork in Arizona's Painted Desert. Through Aug. 28. (Kasmin, 74 Grand St. 219-3219.)

"PAINTING FROM ANOTHER PLANET: NEW PAINTING FROM LOS ANGELES"—Ignore the flip title and you'll find some fine works: Sharon Ellis's subtly psychedelic field of daisies, "Morning" (1998), makes one hope for a more ample New York showing; Kevin Appel's super-flat interiors pay homage to the archi-

the Gerhard Richter lineage. Jeff Ono combines a high-formalist sensibility with conspicuously humble materials (straws, chewing gum). Scott Hug lives, like so many young artists, for trippy geometries. And Richard Hawkins's "Zombies" are disturbing evocations of teen (homo)erotic obsession gone over the brink: computer-generated heads of lusciously vacant boys. Through July 31. (76 Greene St. 941-7077.)

SHORT LIST—YAYOI KUSAMA, Blum, 99 Wooster St. 343-0441. Through Sept. 26. . . . ANN LOVETT, Dorsky, 379 Broadway. 966-6170. Through Aug. 28. . . . ALISON MORITSUGU, Knowlton, 568 Broadway. 966-2625. Through Aug. 15. . . . JOAN PERSONETTE, Courtyard Gallery, World Financial Center, 220 Vesey St. 945-0505. Through Aug. 9. . . . TOBIAS REHBERGER, Petzel, 26 Wooster St. 334-9466. Through Aug. 28. . . . TOMOKO TAKAHASHI, The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. 219-2166. Through July 31. . . . RICHARD TUTTLE, A/D, 560 Broadway. 966-5154. Through July 31.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

CHRISTIE'S EAST—An auction of decorative paintings. (219 E. 67th St. 606-0400. July 22.)

SOOTHEY'S—July 23: Arcade sales of moderately priced furniture and decorative art works. . . . ¶ July 24: Rugs. . . . ¶ July 28: Stamps. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

DOYLE—Victorian furniture, paintings, prints, silver, and decorative art. (175 E. 87th St. 427-2730. July 22.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

MICHAEL ACKERMAN—"Smoke," a new series of photographs taken in Cabbagetown, an old industrial neighborhood in Atlanta. Through July 26. (Bodell, 13 E. 7th St. 477-1820. Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, noon to 7, and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

"COLOR"—Works by gallery artists Lynn Davis, Sally Mann, and Victor Schrager and guest artists Christopher Bucklow, Adam Fuss, and Dana Hoey. Through Aug. 14. (Houk, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 750-7070.)

"DRIVE-INS: DISAPPEARING SUMMER CINEMA"—Featuring works by Jeff Brouws, Lee Friedlander, Richard Misrach, Andrew Moore, Lynn Saville, and Hiroshi Sugimoto. Through Aug. 7. (Richardson, 560 Broadway. 343-1255.)

"NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH"—Diverse takes on suburbia from Gregory Crewdson, Roe Etheridge, Arne Svenson, and others. Through Aug. 14. (Saul, 560 Broadway. 431-0747.)

"SHIP/SHAPE"—Nautical imagery by such European and American photographers as Doris Ulmann, Edward Steichen, Harold Costain, and Edward Prince of Wales. Through Aug. 29. (DeLellis, 47 E. 68th St. 327-1482. Closed Tuesdays.)

"SUMMER SALON V (PICTURES WE LIKE)"—Featuring photographs by Sylvia Plachy, Adam Baer, William Gottlieb, and Lissie Habie. Through Aug. 28. (Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766.)

"A SUMMER WEDDING"—Works by a broad range of artists, including Donna Ferrato, Charles Harbutt, Bruce Davidson, Andy Marcus, Mary Ellen Mark, and Edward Keating. Through Aug. 8. (Leica, 670 Broadway. 777-3051. Opens Saturdays at noon.)

"TAKE THE A TRAIN"—A very large compendium of mostly black-and-white shots of the subways and trains of New York City by such photographers as Louis Faurer, William Klein, Louis Stettner, Walker Evans, Danny Lyon, and Helen Levitt. Through Aug. 14. (Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010.)

"WALKER EVANS: THE MOMA MURALS"/"COUNTER CULTURE: THE DINER IN AMERICA"—Six mural-size prints made by the photographer for his 1971 museum retrospective. / Works by, among others, Garry Winogrand, William Klein, Weegee, and Ray K. Metzker. Both shows through Aug. 21. (Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. 226-1220.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY—"Comparative Concepts: Photographs by August Sander, Karl Blossfeldt, Albert Renger-Patzsch, and Bernd and Hilla Becher." Through Sept. 13. (1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. 860-1777. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY MIDTOWN—"Mathew Brady's Portraits: Images As History, Photography As Art." Through Sept. 6. . . . ¶ "A Bronx Family Album: The Impact of AIDS, by Steve Hart." Through Sept. 6. (Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. 860-1777. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

SHORT LIST—HERMAN COSTA, Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819. Through Aug. 14. . . .

LUCIEN HERVÉ, Gallery 292, at 120 Wooster St. 431-0292. Through Aug. 14. . . . MICHAEL KENNA, Mann, 42 E. 76th St. 570-1223. Through Aug. 14. . . . NINA KORNHONEN, SABA, 116 E. 16th St. 477-7722. Through Aug. 31. . . . ALEXANDER RODCHENKO, Schickler, 560 Broadway. 431-6363. Through Aug. 14. . . .

JOSEF SUDEK, Alan Klotz/Photocollect, 22 E. 72nd St. 327-2211. Through Aug. 1. . . . JOHN WATERS, Gavin Brown's Enterprise, 436 W. 15th St. 627-5258. Through July 31.

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

AMATO OPERA COMPANY—Final performances of a double bill of Wolf-Ferrari's "The Secret of Susanna" (in English) and Massenet's rarely performed "Thérèse." (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. July 24-25 at 7:30 and July 26 at 2:30.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

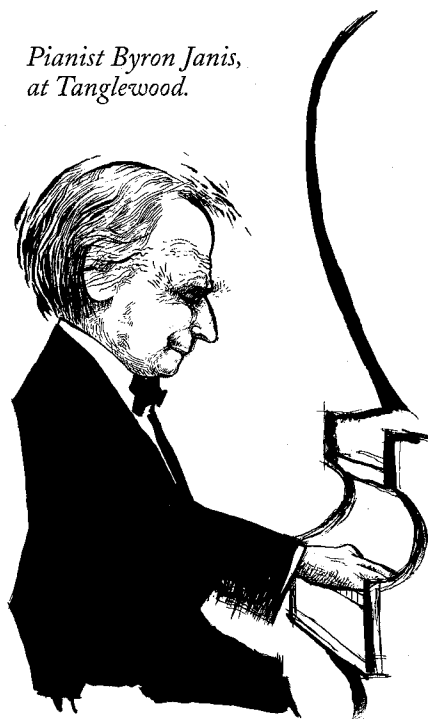
NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC—The orchestra's free concerts in the city's parks continue through July 31. July 26 at 8: Kurt Masur conducts Mussorgsky's "Pictures at an Exhibition" (in Sergei Gorchakov's orchestration), a suite from Prokofiev's "Romeo and Juliet," and Ravel's "Boléro." (Cunningham Park, Queens.) ... July 28 at 8: Roberto Minczuk leads John Williams's "Summon the Heroes" (written for the 1996 Olympic Games, held in Atlanta), Oscar Lorenzo Fernández's "Batuque" (from his 1939 Brazilian folk-inflected suite "Reisado do Pastoreio"), Tchaikovsky's Serenade for Strings, and Dvořák's Symphony No. 8. (Van Cortlandt Park, the Bronx.) (For rain-date information, and for details about the orchestra's out-of-door performances outside New York City, call 875-5709.)

LINCOLN CENTER FESTIVAL 98—Final concerts of the festival. July 22 at 5:30: Christopher Herrick continues his survey of Bach's complete organ works by playing the Preludes and Fugues in B Minor (BWV 544) and A Major (BWV 536), the Concerto in C Major (after Vivaldi), and thirteen chorale settings. (Alice Tully Hall.) ... July 22 and July 24-25, all at 8: An electronic realization of Hildegard von Bingen's "Ordo Virtutum," featuring the Hildegurles. (Clark Studio Theatre, Rose Building, Lincoln Center.) ... July 23 at 5:30: Mr. Herrick performs Bach's Preludes and Fugues in G Major (BWV 550) and E Minor (BWV 533), "Erbarm dich" chorale, "Fuga Sopra il Magnificat 'Meine Seele erhebt den Herrn,'" C-Minor Fantasia, A-Minor Prelude (BWV 551), G-Major Trio (after Telemann), D-Minor Concerto (after Vivaldi), G-Major Trio (BWV 1027a), and six-part Ricercar from "A Musical Offering." (Alice Tully Hall.) ... July 23 at 8:30: The Eos Orchestra, conducted by Jonathan Sheffer, offers an all-Bernstein program comprising excerpts from "Song-fest" (with soprano Angelina Réaux, baritone Philip Cutlip, and bass Richard Bernstein), the "Serenade after Plato's Symposium" (with violinist Anne Akiko Meyers), and a concert version of the ballet "The Dybbuk." (Alice Tully Hall.) ... July 24 at 5:30: Bach's eighteen "Leipzig" Chorales, played by Mr. Herrick. (Alice Tully Hall.) ... July 25 at 5:30: Mr. Herrick plays the Prelude and Fugue in E-Flat Major (BWV 552) and a selection of chorales. (Alice Tully Hall.) ... July 26 at 5:30: In his final concert of the Bach cycle, Mr. Herrick offers the D-Major "Alla breve," C-Minor Fugue (BWV 575), four duets, numerous chorales, and, for a powerful conclusion, the ever-popular Toccata and Fugue in D Minor. (Alice Tully Hall.) (For information about tickets for all festival performances, call 721-6500.)

MOSTLY MOZART—The thirty-second season opens as Gerard Schwarz conducts the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra in Mozart's E-Flat-Major Piano Concerto (K. 271, with André Watts), a pair of his arias (with mezzo-soprano Angelika Kirchschlager), and his Symphony No. 41, as well as selections from Strauss's "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme" and three of his orchestral songs (with Ms. Kirchschlager). (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. July 28-29 at 8.)

RUTGERS SUMMER FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA—Richard Auldon Clark conducts Prokofiev's Fifth Symphony. (Trinity Church, Broadway at Wall St. July 23 at 1. No tickets necessary.)

Pianist Byron Janis, at Tanglewood.



NEW YORK POPS—Skitch Henderson leads popular classics. (Prospect Park Bandshell, Prospect Park W. at 9th St., Brooklyn. July 25 at 7:30. No tickets necessary.)

BRONX ARTS ENSEMBLE—Carlos Franzetti leads the group in the première of his own "Tango Fatal," as well as in tangos by Carlos Gardel, Astor Piazzolla, and others. (Rockwood Drive Circle, Van Cortlandt Park, the Bronx. July 26 at 2. For rain-date information, call 718-601-7399. ... McGinley Center, Fordham University, Bronx Rose Hill Campus at Southern Blvd., the Bronx. July 26 at 4. No tickets necessary for either performance.)

NEW AMSTERDAM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA—Jeffrey Domoto conducts Gluck's Overture to "Iphigénie en Aulis," as well as Mozart's Oboe Concerto (with Marcia Butler) and "Prague" Symphony. (St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 346 W. 20th St. July 28 at 7:30. Tickets at the door.)

RECITALS

"MUSIC IN THE GARDEN"—In this installment of the Church of the Holy Trinity's outdoor picnic-and-concert series, flutist Iris Derke, harpist Lisa Tannenbaum, and cellist Allen Alexander play works by Ravel, Villa-Lobos, and Satie, and conclude with a group improvisation. (316 E. 88th St. July 22 at 7:15. Admission by contribution.)

BARGEMUSIC—July 23 at 6 and July 26 at 4: An all-Mozart program, comprising both of his piano quartets and an aria from "Il Rè Pastore," with violinist Mark Peskanov, violist Daniel Panner, cellist Eugene Osadchy, pianist Alexander Peskanov, and soprano DeBorge Pinnington. ... July 24 at 7:30: The Messrs. Peskanov are joined by colleagues for chamber-scaled performances of Schubert's A-Major Rondo for Violin (D. 438), Mozart's E-Flat-Major Piano Concerto (K. 449), and Mendelssohn's Concerto for Violin, Piano, and Strings. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061.)

ANNE AZÉMA—The soprano, assisted by several instrumentalists, performs secular music from twelfth- and thirteenth-century France. (Medieval Court, Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. July 23 at 8:30.)

SUMMERGARDEN—This summer, the Museum of Modern Art's exploration of the most recent century of music is focussing on works by New York City composers. In this installment, pianist Lora Tcheboratova offers three of the "Sea Pieces" by Edward MacDowell

(the first music professor at Columbia University), Roger Sessions's Sonata No. 2, George Perle's Ballade, and pieces by Anthony Coleman, Virgil Thomson, Tania León, and Scott Joplin (who spent the last decade of his life in our town). (Museum of Modern Art Sculpture Garden, 14 W. 54th St. July 24-25 at 8:30. No tickets necessary.)

ESSEX STRING QUARTET—The foursome plays Mozart's Quartet in D Major (K. 575) and Mendelssohn's Quartet in E-Flat Major (Op. 12). (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. July 26 at noon. For information about tickets, call 718-885-2478.)

RICHARD KOGAN—Pianist, performing Debussy's "Estampes" and Stravinsky's "Trois Scènes de 'Pétrouchka.'" (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. July 26 at 6 and 8. No tickets necessary.)

ILAN RECHTMAN—The pianist (and impresario of the weekly concert series at this venue) performs an all-Bach program, comprising the Partita No. 5, the "Italian" Concerto, and selections from both books of the "Well-Tempered Clavier." (Mansfield Hotel, 12 W. 44th St. July 27 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

TIMOTHY SMITH—The music director and organist of the Riverside Church performs a recital on the church's Aeolian-Skinner instrument: Elgar's "Pomp and Circumstance" March No. 1, Bach's C-Minor Passacaglia and Fugue, Julius Reubke's "Sonata on the 94th Psalm," and works by Petr Eben and Paul Manz. (Riverside Dr. at 120th St. July 28 at 7. Admission by contribution.)

PATRICK GRANT GROUP—The ensemble offers avant-garde works by Mr. Grant, including electro-acoustic pieces, gamelan-inspired compositions, and microtonal works. (Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. 219-3055. July 28 at 7.)

OUT OF TOWN

TANGLEWOOD—July 22 at 8:30: Pianist Byron Janis performs Mozart's F-Major Sonata (K. 332), Schumann's "Arabesque," selections from Prokofiev's "Visions Fugitives," and a passel of Chopin (nocturnes, mazurkas, waltzes, an impromptu, and an étude). ... July 23 at 8:30: A program of medieval music, with Anonymous 4. ...

July 24 at 8:30: André Previn leads the Boston Symphony in Vaughan Williams's "Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis," Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 2 (with Emanuel Ax), and Dimitri Mitropoulos's arrangement, for string orchestra, of Beethoven's C-Sharp-Minor Quartet (Op. 131). ...

July 25 at 8:30: John Williams conducts the Boston Symphony in his Violin Concerto (featuring Gil Shaham) and his song cycle "Seven for Luck" (with soprano Cynthia Haymon), as well as Barber's Overture to "The School for Scandal" and Stravinsky's "Firebird" Suite. ... July 26 at 2:30: Seiji Ozawa conducts the Boston Symphony in Mahler's Symphony No. 3, with mezzo-soprano Florence Quivar, the Tanglewood Festival Chorus, and a children's choir. ...

July 26 at 8:30: A Gershwin evening, with Mr. Previn (on piano) and double-bassist David Finck. (Lenox, Mass. 800-274-8499.)

NEWPORT MUSIC FESTIVAL—The following represent several highlights from the concluding week of the festival, which takes place at Newport's Gilded Age cottages. July 22 at 9: The North American debut recital of Ulugbek Palvanov, winner of the First International Tbilisi Piano Competition. (Rosecliff.) ...

July 24 at 11:45 p.m.: Pianist John Browning and narrator Richard Knisely offer Strauss's melodrama "Enoch Arden" (after Tennyson's poem). (Marble House.) ...

July 25 at 11:45 p.m.: Haydn's "The Seven Last Words of Our Saviour from the Cross," in its string-quartet version, played in an ecclesiastical setting. (Ochre Court Chapel.) (Newport, R.I. 401-849-0700.)

CARAMOOR—July 23 at 4:15: Piano works by Mozart and Liszt, performed by Lera Auerbach. ... July 24 at 8: The Jacques

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Thibaud String Trio performs Mozart's Divertimento in E-Flat Major (K. 563) and (with pianist David Golub) Brahms's G-Minor Piano Quartet . . . July 25 at 1: A children's concert. . . July 25 at 8:30: Donald Runnicles leads the Orchestra of St. Luke's in an all-Mozart concert: the "Zauberflöte" Overture, B-Flat-Major Piano Concerto (K. 595, with Andreas Haeffliger), and Symphony No. 41. . . July 26 at 4:30: Pianist Richard Goode performs numerous short movements by Mozart, in addition to Beethoven's E-Minor Sonata (Op. 90), Schumann's C-Major Phantasia, and pieces by Chopin and Debussy. (Katonah, N.Y. 914-232-1252.)

GLIMMERGLASS OPERA—July 23 at 8 and July 27 at 2: "Tosca." . . July 24 at 8: "Falstaff." . . July 25 at 8 and July 28 at 2: Handel's "Partenope," with soprano Lisa Saffer and countertenor David Daniels. . . July 26 at 2: Virgil Thomson's "The Mother of Us All." (Cooperstown, N.Y. 607-547-2255.)

MAYERICK CONCERTS—July 25 at 8: Pianist David Korevaar performs his own Partita, in addition to Liszt's Sonata and works by Chopin. . . July 26 at 3: The Cremona Arts Trio plays piano trios by Shostakovich (in E Minor) and Mozart (in E-Flat Major), in addition to Fauré's G-Minor Piano Quartet (with violist Kikuei Ikeda assisting). (Woodstock, N.Y. 914-679-8217.)

MUSIC MOUNTAIN—The Cavani String Quartet performs quartets by Beethoven (in D Major, Op. 18, No. 3) and Bartók (his Second), as well as Mozart's G-Major String Quintet (with violist James Dunham assisting). (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126. July 26 at 3.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

CIVIL WAR ENCAMPMENT—Members of the 14th Brooklyn Regiment (the "Red Legged Devils"), the 88th New York State Volunteers (the "Irish Brigade"), and Company A of the 15th New York Volunteer Engineers pitch their tents beside the cannons of Winslow's Battery D of the 1st New York Light Artillery Regiment at Historic Richmond Town, a twenty-five-acre restored nineteenth-century village, on July 25-26, from 10 to 5. In addition to the usual camp activities (eating, drinking, military drills), the Union troops will face the 30th Virginia Regiment in a skirmish each afternoon. And Saturday night, from 8 to 11, civilians and soldiers alike are welcome at the Regimental Ball, an affair featuring period dress, contra dancing, and a live band and caller. (441 Clarke Ave., Staten Island. For more information, and reservations for the ball, call 718-351-1611.)

READINGS—July 23 at 7: By essayists Phillip Lopate, Jeffrey M. Bockman, and Tyler Gore, from their work. (Housing Works Used Book Café, 126 Crosby St. No tickets necessary.) . . July 27 at 8: By U.S. Attorney Mary Jo White and lawyers Benjamin Bycel and Gerald Lefcourt, from "Ladies and Gentlemen of the Jury: Greatest Closing Arguments in Modern Law." (Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. 840-6800.) . . July 28 at 6:30: By Alison Lurie, from her novel "The Last Resort." (Rizzoli, 454 West Broadway. No tickets necessary.)

TALKS—July 22 at 6:30: John Margolies, author of "Fun Along the Road," talks about peach-shaped water towers, thirty-eight-foot Uncle Sam statues, reptile gardens, and other roadside attractions. (The Urban Center, 457 Madison Ave. For reservations, which are required, call 980-3767.) . . July 23 at 7:30: Stan Fischler discusses his book, "The Subway: A Trip Through Time on New York's Rapid Transit." (Barnes & Noble, 4 Astor Pl. No tickets necessary.) . . July 28 at 7: Film scholar Art Simon talks with Dennis Hopper about the making of "Easy Rider." (Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. 423-3587.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Really Cool

IF it's too darn hot, you might consider a short trip to Antarctica, especially now that the frozen continent has its own travel guide in the **LONELY PLANET** series. Of course, the South Pole is now halfway through its six months of winter darkness, so it might not be the



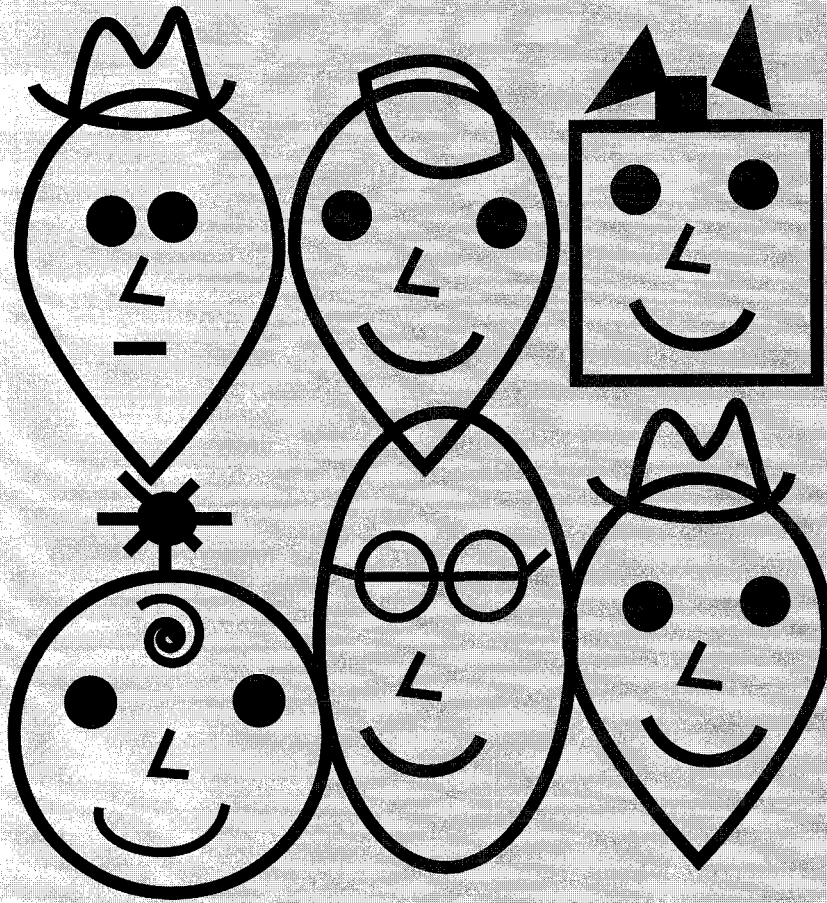
best time to go. But it's surprising how many adventurers—not to mention writers—have been undeterred by the inhospitable conditions of the "white desert."

Douglas Mawson, the Australian explorer, thrived on hardship. **THE HOME OF THE BLIZZARD**, his 1915 book, to be republished this fall by St. Martin's, narrates with terse vigor the tale of his 1,245-mile sledge journey, which killed his two companions. The deprivations endured by earlier visitors to the region are fascinatingly re-created in Alan Gurney's history **BELOW THE CONVERGENCE: VOYAGES TOWARD ANTARCTICA 1697-1839** (published, appropriately enough, by Penguin).

Writers have trouble finding words when trying to describe the astounding emptiness of the continent, and, to judge from the photographs of vertiginous icescapes in Mike Lucas's **ANTARCTICA** (Abbeville), it's not hard to see why. Those who prefer a little vegetation with their ice would do better to look at **ANTARCTIC OASIS**, by Tim and Pauline Carr (Norton), an affectionate portrait of South Georgia, a British island in the Southern Ocean.

According to Francis Spufford's **I MAY BE SOME TIME: ICE AND THE ENGLISH IMAGINATION** (St. Martin's), it is the British who have most consistently fixated on Antarctica—perhaps exhilarated to find a climate even worse than their own. The English novelist Jenny Diski has produced a highly idiosyncratic travelogue in **SKATING TO ANTARCTICA** (out next month from Ecco); during her trip through the region she often neglected the scenery, preferring to stay in her cabin anatomizing her miserable upbringing. Another British woman in this generally male domain is journalist Sara Wheeler, whose **TERRA INCOGNITA** (Random House) provides a convincing rationale for the continent's pull on writers: "All places are more than the sum of their physical components, and I saw that Antarctica exists most vividly in the mind."

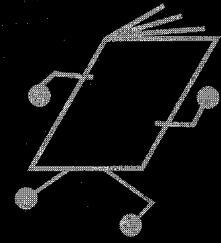
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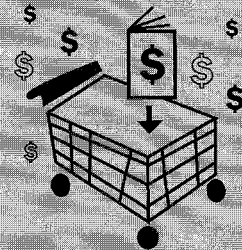
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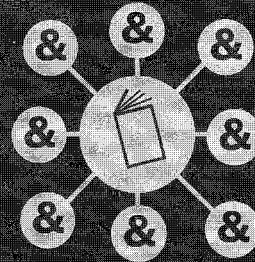
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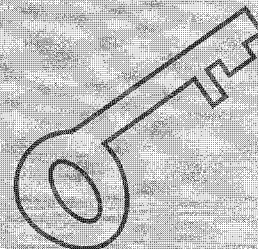
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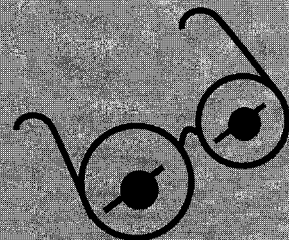
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OPENINGS

BILLY'S HOLLYWOOD SCREEN KISS—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening July 24. (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Regency.)

DISTURBING BEHAVIOR—A new student in Candle Bay (James Marsden) finds that most of the teen-agers in town have no vices and cause no problems, in this thriller directed by David Nutter. Opening July 24. (Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, State, and Waverly.)

EAST PALACE, WEST PALACE—A drama of clashes between gay men and the police in Beijing. Directed by Zhang Yuan. In Chinese. Opening July 24. (Quad Cinema.)

MAFIA!—Jim Abrahams' comedy about a Mob patriarch who must decide which of his two sons will take over the family business. With Jay Mohr, Billy Burke, and Lloyd Bridges. Opening July 24. (Embassy 1.)

THE SALT MEN OF TIBET—Ulrike Koch's documentary follows a band of nomadic herdsmen on their annual trek to the Himalayan lakes to gather salt. In Tibetan. Opening July 22. (Film Forum.)

SAVING PRIVATE RYAN—A drama about a small group of soldiers who are ordered behind enemy lines during the D Day invasion. With Tom Hanks, directed by Steven Spielberg. Opening July 24. (Coronet Cinemas, Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, Village Theatre VII, and Ziegfeld.)

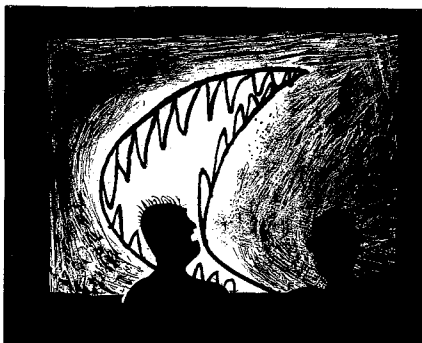
WESTERN—The comic adventures of a Spaniard (Sergi Lopez) and a Russian (Sacha Bourdo) as they travel the western coast of France. Directed by Manuel Poirier. In French. Opening July 24. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

FILM NOTES

(If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.)

ARMAGEDDON—"The Right Stuff" meets "The Dirty Dozen" in a frenzy of special effects and ear-shattering detonations. An asteroid "the size of Texas" is speeding toward our fair planet, and unless it's nuked within eighteen days we'll all be saying good night, world. NASA's executive director (Billy Bob Thornton) devises a plan to drill a hole in the asteroid and blast it from the inside. Enter

THE MOVIES



Bruce Willis, as Harry S. Stamper, "the world's best deep-core driller" and a maverick with a heart of patriotic mush. Harry recruits a crew of roughnecks, including A.J. (Ben Affleck), a hot-rodder who's in love with Grace (Liv Tyler), Harry's babe of a daughter, and Rockhound (Steve Buscemi), who likes hanging out with strippers. Willis, with his imperturbable gaze and incessant little smirk, doesn't seem a natural choice for even a scruffy hero like Harry, but Affleck demonstrates a sexy Paul Newmanish charm and is clearly bound for stardom. The surprisingly witty script was worked on by a squadron of writers, including Robert Towne.—*Daphne Merkin* (7/13/98) (Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Embassy 2, Embassy 3, Murray Hill Cinemas, Olympia, Orpheum VII, Sutton, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE DECALOGUE—Another dose of fun from Krzysztof Kieslowski (whose "Three Colors" trilogy—"Blue," "White," and "Red"—drew acclaim here): ten hours of cancer, abortion, incest, strangulation, and the thwarting of brotherly love, mostly set amid the rainy projects of an oppressed Polish town. This earlier series was made for Polish television in 1988, when the nation was still under martial law, and comprises ten hour-long films, each devoted to one of the Ten Commandments. Given those factors, the whole endeavor could have collapsed into rusty political parable, but, though Kieslowski's subjects are often parodies of gloom, he picks his way through them with a gathering delicacy and a frowning ironic wit. Anyone

who associates art films with monotonous meditation will be surprised to find these movies so packed with stuff; the director doesn't shy away from murder, car chases, or fine-boned blondes, or from the Hollywood hook of a mysterious letter that warns, "To be opened after my death..." The best of the ten is No. 5, "Thou Shalt Not Kill" (it also exists in a full-length version entitled "A Short Film About Killing"); if you thought "Dead Man Walking" screwed you into the clutches of the capital-punishment debate, try the pincer grip of this picture, which derives not so much from a forceful argument as from an overwhelming flourish of style. Kieslowski filters his skies to the color of a bruise, as if fate were bearing down from the heavens; he spies shards of beauty in the rubble of crummy lives, and seems wholly at ease with the random possibility of miracles. The films are being shown in five double bills. Thou shalt not miss. In Polish.—*Anthony Lane* (Walter Reade Theatre; July 24-30.)

THE FUGITIVE (1947)—John Ford's devout Catholic rendering of Graham Greene's "The Power and the Glory" is a majestic failure. Knowing that he couldn't depict the south-of-the-border priest at the center of Greene's novel as a fornicating alcoholic, Ford and his screenwriter, Dudley Nichols, chose to make him the Christ figure in an out-and-out Passion play—a reluctant but pure martyr in a Latin-American state that has banned religion. (Nichols later complained that Ford threw out most of his script anyway.) Henry Fonda, as the Jesus-like priest, and Dolores Del Rio, as his Mary Magdalene, might as well be posing for a frieze. Still, Ford and his cinematographer, Gabriel Figueroa, shooting on location in Mexico, fill the screen with vital imagery—mounted police clattering up the steps of a rural village, a gringo murderer fading into the peasant crowds of a grungy port town.—*Michael Sragow* (Brooklyn Museum of Art; July 25.)

GHOSTBUSTERS II (1989)—Surprisingly, it's more enjoyable than the first "Ghostbusters." It's a big comedy, but it's light on its feet, and the throwaway jokes are weightless—they ping! and dissolve in the air. You can't remember what you're laughing at, but you feel great. The script, by Harold Ramis and Dan Aykroyd, is a floating crap game, like the scripts for the Hope and Crosby "Road" pictures. Bill Murray holds it together, and assorted comedians—Sigourney Weaver, Rick Moranis, Annie Potts, Ernie Hudson, Peter MacNicol, Cheech Marin, Harris Yulin, Ramis, and Aykroyd—come in and out of the scenes, dropping one-liners. The comic premise is that the collective angry energy of Manhattanites is feeding an underground river of boiling slime, which is swelling; our bad vibes are literally destroying the city. Directed by Ivan Reitman; cinematography by Michael Chapman.—*Pauline Kael* (Walter Reade Theatre; July 25-26.)

HENRY FOOL—Hal Hartley's latest film takes a while to get going: almost an hour passes before it develops any emotional momentum. Yet when it does, it's powerful and strangely unnerving—there's an original and ambitious voice at work here that puts most independent filmmakers to shame. The story concerns an oddball garbage man named Simon Grim (James Urbaniak) who becomes a famous poet under the tutelage of Henry Fool (Thomas Jay Ryan), an ex-convict drifter. Hartley has refined his offbeat writing style from rambling riffs to sharp, halting spurts of dialogue that are funny, with an edge of desperation. The film captures the sad world of Hartley's lost poetic lovers better than any picture he's made before.—*Bruce Diones* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

THE LAST DAYS OF DISCO—Whit Stillman is back on home ground—Manhattan—in the last of a trilogy of romantic comedies. Two Hampshire College graduates in the early eighties—Charlotte (Kate Beckinsale) and Alice (Chloë Sevigny)—share lowly jobs in book



At Film Forum 2, a program of films directed by Preston Sturges.

publishing and a consuming desire to hang out at "the club." Their fellow-revellers include Des (Chris Eigeman), the club's lightly amoral manager, who claims to be gay when he wants to break up with a woman; Jimmy (Mackenzie Astin), who's desperate to impress his advertising clients; and Josh (Matt Keeslar), a junior prosecutor who's capable of deconstructing any subject, including disco fever. The recognizable Stillman touches are here—especially the instant nostalgia for the moment as it happens—but the film doesn't leave much of an imprint.—*D.M.* (6/15/98) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

LETHAL WEAPON 4—This Warner Bros. franchise is so depressingly familiar that the brief time spent on reintroducing the old-timers—Mel Gibson's manic cop, Danny Glover's L.A.P.D. family man, Joe Pesci's foul-mouthed sidekick—comes as a relief. The negligible plot (it has something to do with counterfeiting) is poorly paced, and there's nothing much to do but watch how director Richard Donner sets up his stunt-filled action bits. It's take-the-money-and-run filmmaking, with the actors practically winking their dialogue at each other, and it's all supposed to be tongue-in-cheek fun. It isn't.—*B.D.* (Astor Plaza, Coronet Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, Murray Hill Cinema, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

MADLINE—Ludwig Bemelmans's classic stories of a plucky little girl in Paris inspired this cute but timid screen version. The movie missteps by overemphasizing an Edwardian-

era plot, in which Madeline (the appropriately tiny and adorable Hatty Jones) has to win over a grumpy old rich man (Nigel Hawthorne). On top of that, there's the problem that always arises when a cartoon child is embodied in the flesh. A fantasy drawing who constantly gets into scrapes is lovable; a real child who does so seems troubled and in need of help. Frances McDormand is strong, in the Eve Arden tradition, as Miss Clavel, the maternal, overworked nun who runs Madeline's school. Daisy von Scherler Mayer directed with laid-back charm and a frustrating lack of focus.—*Sarah Kerr* (Chelsea West, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.)

MARK TWAIN'S AMERICA—Stephen Low's diminutive 3-D documentary about our greatest humorist should be given credit for at least achieving an element of surprise: what other movie director has had the courage to hurl an author at his audience instead of an asteroid? The movie, which clocks in at just under an hour and uses nineteenth-century photography as well as scenes with contemporary Twain groupies to illustrate a selection of readings from some of the author's best-known works, is given a Southern-fried narration by an actor who apparently thinks that the bewhiskered man in the white suit is Colonel Sanders. Many of the stills—from a portrait of two black children with the aged look of prisoners to a shot of vagrant watermelon pickers eating their pay—uncomfortably invade your space. A close encounter with a champion jumping frog that can bound twenty feet almost makes the noseache from the Imax goggles worth it.—*Jay Fielden* (Lincoln Square.)

MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS (1944)—As pretty and inviting as a candy sampler, with some bitter-sweet nuggets inside. The director, Vincente Minnelli, puts his sophisticated style and vibrant performers at the service of a sim-

ple Midwestern fable with the message "There's no place like home." The blooming Judy Garland ("I have too much bloom," she quips) and the feisty young Margaret O'Brien are the liveliest of Leon Ames's four daughters; under their influence, Ames, a lawyer, decides to stay in the cozy Gateway City of 1903 rather than accept a promotion to his firm's New York office. With the help of an able cast (Mary Astor as the mother, Harry Davenport as Grandpa, and Lucille Bremer and Joan Carroll as the other sisters), Minnelli brings out the romance of domesticity.—*M.S.* (Museum of Modern Art; July 26 and July 28.)

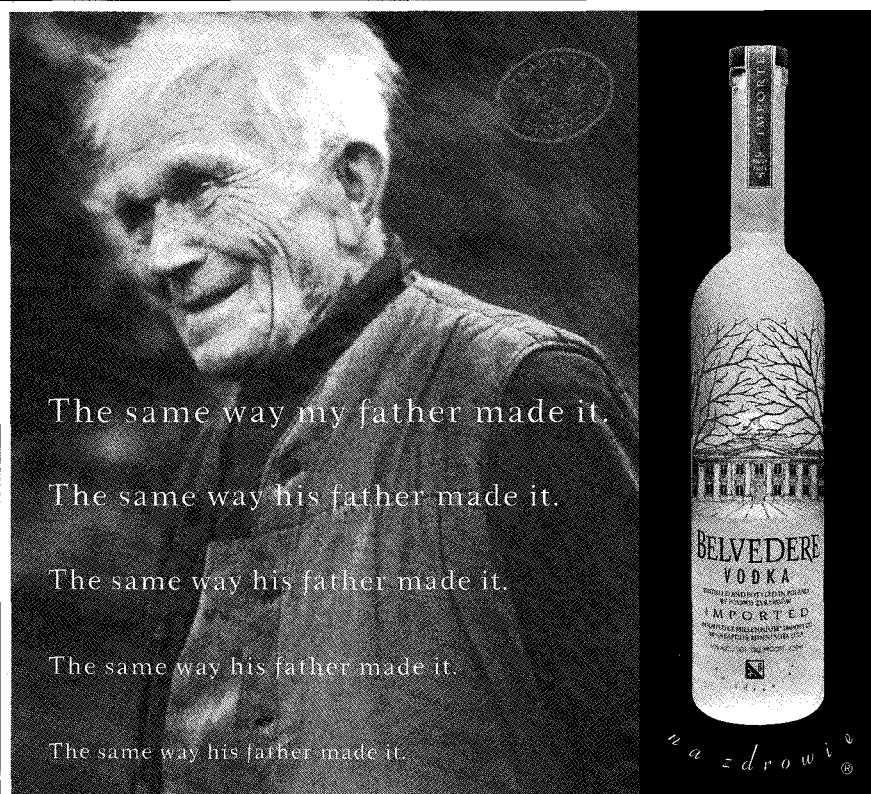
MULAN—Disney takes it easy on the hype this time, allowing its latest summer animated picture to build its own fan base. It's a canny decision, and the story, based on a Chinese legend, is clever: a young girl cuts her hair, joins the army disguised as a man, and saves China from the Huns. It gives boys lots of exciting (if cross-dressed) action, and lets girls root for an empowering hero. While the movie sticks to the familiar Disney formula, the cute sidekicks are less intrusive and the songs are not as overbearing as usual; for the most part, it sustains an enjoyable hum.—*B.D.* (Chelsea West, Cinema 3rd Avenue, Guild, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.)

OUT OF SIGHT—After many mishaps, the art of bringing Elmore Leonard's novels to the screen is coming to fruition. This latest adaptation, by director Steven Soderbergh and screenwriter Scott Frank, gets it just about right. George Clooney, a kindly bank robber, breaks out of jail and into the life of Karen Sisco (Jennifer Lopez), who is, if you are prepared to believe it, a U.S. marshal. He kidnaps her, then releases her, after which she turns the tables and spends the rest of the movie looking for him. This being Leonard country, the two leads are required to

THEATRE ADDRESSES

(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

ANGELIKA FILM CENTER, 18 W. Houston St.
ART GREENWICH TWIN, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
ASTOR PLAZA, 44th St. at Broadway.
BECKMAN, Second Ave. at 66th St.
CHELSEA CINEMAS, 260 W. 23rd St.
CHELSEA WEST, 333 W. 23rd St.
CINEMA I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
CINEMA II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
CINEMA 3RD AVENUE, Third Ave. at 60th St.
CINEMA VILLAGE, 22 E. 12th St.
CORONET CINEMAS, Third Ave. at 59th St.
CRITERION CENTER, Broadway at 44th St.
EAST 85TH STREET, First Ave. at 85th St.
EASTSIDE PLAYHOUSE, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84TH STREET SIXPLEX, Broadway at 84th St.
86TH STREET EAST TWIN, Third Ave. at 86th St.
EMBASSY I, 2, AND 3, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
59TH STREET EAST CINEMA, 239 E. 59th St.
FILM FORUM, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
FIRST & 62ND CINEMAS, 400 E. 62nd St.
GOTHAM CINEMA, Third Ave. at 58th St.
GUILD, 33 W. 50th St.
LINCOLN PLAZA CINEMAS, Broadway at 63rd St.
LINCOLN SQUARE, Broadway at 68th St.
METRO CINEMA 1 AND 2, Broadway at 99th St.
MURRAY HILL CINEMAS, 160 E. 34th St.
NEW YORK TWIN, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19TH STREET EAST 6, Broadway at 19th St.
OLYMPIA I AND II, Broadway at 107th St.
ORPHEUM VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
PARIS, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
PARK & 86TH STREET CINEMAS, 125 E. 86th St.
QUAD CINEMA, 34 W. 13th St.
REGENCY, Broadway at 67th St.
THE SCREENING ROOM, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62ND & BROADWAY, 62 W. 62nd St.
64TH AND 2ND, Second Ave. at 64th St.
72ND STREET EAST, Third Ave. at 71st St.
STATE, Broadway at 45th St.
SUTTON I AND 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34TH STREET SHOWPLACE, 238 E. 34th St.
VILLAGE EAST CINEMAS, Second Ave. at 12th St.
VILLAGE THEATRE VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
WAYVERLY I AND 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
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go to bed with each other before the final shootout; the sex itself is the one point of visual sloppiness in a movie that is otherwise crisp and smartly edited, full of bleached Miami sunshine and leaden snowstorms in Detroit.—*A.L.* (7/6/98) (Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, State, and 34th Street Showplace.)

THE PALM BEACH STORY (1942)—One of the giddiest and most chaotic of Preston Sturges's satiric orgies. The romantic problems of the leads (Joel McCrea and Claudette Colbert) get shoved aside by the secondary characters. Colbert, travelling by train, becomes involved with a bunch of drunken millionaires—members of the "Ale and Quail Club," on board with their hounds and guns, who stage an informal skeet shoot in the club car and demolish the glassware. With Mary Astor, Rudy Vallee, and the Sturges stock company, including William Demarest, Franklin Pangborn, and Jimmy Conlin.—*P.K.* (Film Forum 2; July 24-28.)

π—This super-low-budget debut by Darren Aronofsky is a noir-like metaphysical sci-fi flick, shot in grainy black and white, about a mathematical genius who believes he's found a formula that describes the chaos of the stock market. He's pursued by Wall Street thugs and, in true crackpot absurdity, a Cabala sect that believes he's unlocked a secret of the Scriptures. Aronofsky's delirious, Kafkaesque writing and imaginatively distorted camerawork don't quite add up, but it's fascinating, hallucinogenic film work.—*B.D.* (Angelika Film Center.)

THE SILVER SCREEN: COLOR ME LAVENDER—Mark Rappaport's film explores homosexuality in Hollywood from the thirties to the sixties. (Reviewed this week in *The Current Cinema*.) (Quad Cinema.)

SLAMNATION—If you enjoy standup comedy, rock and roll, group improv, rap, or MTV, you may be amused by Paul Devlin's documentary about the team poetry competitions that culminated in last year's finals in Portland, Oregon. If you're a lover of poetry, all bets are off. On display are the "adrenaline junkies of the literary world," as one contestant describes himself and his fellow-practitioners. Energy, rhythm, and aggressive wordplay are the prime components; subtlety, introspection, and elegance are for other voices, other rooms. Taylor Mali of Team Providence is particularly entertaining, a loudmouthed ironist out for the poetic kill. (Live performances precede the 8 P.M. and 10 P.M. showings on Fridays and Saturdays.)—*Ken Marks* (Film Forum.)

SMALL SOLDIERS—Joe Dante recycles his blueprint from "Gremlins," using animatronic toy soldiers, but there's no magic this time. The story—about a military chip placed inside children's toys which brings them to gung-ho life—is promising, but the film lacks any true style. The actors (among them Phil Hartman and Kirsten Dunst) don't have much to do but react to the mayhem, while the toys' dialogue wastes the talents of an unusually rich cast of voices that includes Tommy Lee Jones, Christopher Guest, and Christina Ricci. Stan Winston and his special-effects team do a spectacular job, and Dante gets a few perverse laughs (there's a wonderful scene in which some Barbie-like dolls are turned into Brides of Frankenstein), but the awkward tone—sometimes funny, sometimes wicked—deflates the excitement.—*B.D.* (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, East 85th Street, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.)

THE THIEF—Considering that Pavel Chukhrai's movie is set in the Soviet Union in the early nineteen-fifties, it's pretty easy to watch. The center of events is a young boy (Misha

Philipchuk), whose mother takes up with a tall, dark, and handsomely immoral soldier called Tolyan (Vladimir Mashkov). The three of them scoot from one set of lodgings to the next, armed with little but a sack of stolen silverware; the movie is, among other things, a dark Dickensian comedy of the no-mad—of the need to live on one's wits. Despite the blue eyes of his hero, Chukhrai just about avoids the pitfalls of cuteness, and there is no mistaking his instinct for the stray anecdote and swollen minor characters. As the film moves, rather too hastily, toward its resolution, you might feel cheated by a sense of emotional patness; for the most part, however, there is real grit and sting in this slight tale. In Russian.—*A.L.* (7/20/98) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

ALSO PLAYING

BOYS IN LOVE 2: Cinema Village. . . **BUFFALO '66:** Angelika Film Center, Cinema II, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . **A DAY AT THE RACES:** Paris. . . **DR. DOLITTLE:** Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Waverly. . . **GONE WITH THE WIND:** Lincoln Square, 64th and 2nd, and Waverly. . . **THE MASK OF ZORRO:** 84th Street Sixplex, 19th Street East 6, Olympia, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, State, 34th Street Showplace, and Village East Cinemas. . . **A NIGHT AT THE OPERA:** Paris. . . **THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MARY:** Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Showplace, and Village East Cinemas. . . **TITANIC** (reviewed in our issue of 12/15/97): Worldwide Cinemas. . . **THE TRUMAN SHOW** (6/15/98): Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, and Village Theatre VII. . . **THE X-FILES:** Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, Village East Cinemas, and Ziegfeld.

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(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

FILM FORUM 2, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—July 22-23: "My Man Godfrey" (1936, Gregory LaCava) and "Bluebeard's Eighth Wife" (1938, Ernst Lubitsch). . . . ¶ A program of films made by Preston Sturges. July 24-28: "The Lady Eve" (1941) and "The Palm Beach Story" (†).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—July 23 at 2:30: "Simple Men" (1992, Hal Hartley). . . . July 23 at 6 and July 24 at 2:30: "On the Waterfront" (1954, Elia Kazan). . . . July 24 at 5: "Dead of Night" (1945, Basil Dearden, Alberto Cavalcanti, Robert Hamer, and Charles Crichton). . . . July 24 at 8 and July 26 at 5: "Taxi Driver" (1976, Martin Scorsese). . . . July 25 at 2 and 5 and July 27 at 2:30 and 6: Two different programs of Warner Bros. cartoons. . . . July 26 at 2 and July 28 at 6: "Meet Me in St. Louis" (†). . . . July 28 at 2:30: "The Bed You Sleep In" (1993, Jon Jost).

WALTER READE THEATRE, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through July 23: The New York Video Festival. . . . ¶ July 24-30: "The Decalogue" (†). . . . ¶ Weekend showings for children. July 25-26 at 2: "Ghostbusters II" (†).
AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—A program of films directed by or produced by Steven Spielberg. July 25 at 2 and 7: "Who Framed Roger Rabbit?" (1988, Robert Zemeckis). . . . July 25 at 4:30: "Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom" (1984). . . . July 26 at 2: "Jaws" (1975). . . .



Sacha Bourdo and Sergi Lopez in Manuel Poirier's "Western."

July 26 at 4:30: "Close Encounters of the Third Kind, the Special Edition" (1980).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—July 28 at 12:30, 3:30, and 6:30: "The Lovers" (1958, Louis Malle; in French). . . . July 28 at 9: "Damage" (1993, Malle).

THE 21ST ASIAN AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL—Two weekends (July 24-26 and July 31-Aug. 1) of new films from India, the United States, Hong Kong, Japan, China, South Korea, and the Philippines. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. For information, call 925-6014.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000, ext. 230)—A program of Mexican films on which Gabriel Figueroa served as cinematographer. July 25 at 5: "The Fugitive" (†).

BRYANT PARK, Sixth Ave. at 42nd St.—Mondays, starting at dusk: free drive-in-style moviegoing, beginning with coming attractions. The feature on July 27 will be "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn" (1945, Elia Kazan). (Rain date is the following night.)

A DIFFERENT LIGHT BOOKSTORE, 151 W. 19th St.—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On July 26 at 7, the feature will be "Suddenly Last Summer" (1959, Joseph L. Mankiewicz).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—A program of films by Michelangelo Antonioni; in Italian, with English subtitles. July 24 at 7:30 and July 26 at 4: Short films by Antonioni. . . . July 25 at 3: "L'Éclisse" (1961). . . . July 25 at 8 and July 26 at 6:30: "Story of a Love Affair" (1950).

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3587)—July 22 at 2:30: "Full Speed Ahead" (1951, Ismael Rodríguez; in Spanish). . . . July 22 at 6: "Electra Glide in Blue" (1973, James William Guercio). . . . July 24 at 2:30: "Girl on a Motorcycle" (1968, Jack Cardiff). . . . July 24 at 7:30: "Blonde in Black Leather" (1975, Carlo Di Palma; in Italian). . . . July 25 at 2:30: "Scorpio Rising" (1963, Kenneth Anger), "He Would've Rode a Harley" (1996, Mary Beth Bresolin), and "Biker Billy Cooks with Fire" (1993, Bill Hufnagle). . . . July 25 at 7:30: "The Italian Machine" (1976, David Cronenberg) and "Motor Psycho" (1965, Russ Meyer).

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THE TALK OF THE TOWN

THE SPORTING SCENE

After the World Cup victory, Paris is a melting pot for a day.



ALTHOUGH France didn't win the World Cup until just before midnight last Sunday, the celebrations in Paris started hours before the game began. By two o'clock in the afternoon, the beeping of horns along the Seine had become a din, and the kids with their faces painted red-white-and-blue, heads poking up through the sunroofs of Peugeots racing along the quais, had become a menace. Win or lose, the *crise* was already over.

Cars are cars all over the world, of course, and horns are horns, and a victory celebration in Paris doesn't sound much different from a victory celebration in New York, or, for that matter, from a traffic tieup outside the Holland Tunnel. Even the theme song of the French victory was not the "Marseillaise" but Queen's "We Are the Champions."

Anyway, the whole point of the celebration was that it wasn't a champagne occasion. It was bottled water and cheap booze and a lot of beer. What made it memorable was that, for once, the carnival atmosphere of the Latin Quarter and the Marais spilled over into official French culture, and kept right on spilling. (By Tuesday morning, it had even spilled over into the garden of the Élysée, where a visibly blanching President Chirac greeted the players to a chorus of "We Are the Champions," sung, in best Freddie Mercury English, by the crowd thronging the team.)

At one-thirty in the morning after

the victory, you could take the world's most beautiful walk—beginning at the Institut de France and moving across the Pont des Arts and around the Cour Carrée of the Louvre and then to the Tuileries and the Champs-Élysées—and feel as if, in the presence of so many happy people, the *grand siècle* itself had gone a little lopsided and blissed-out. Misrule ruled. A man wrapped in a *tricolore* was relieving himself against the front wall of the Institut de France—discreetly, with maximum esprit de corps, but, still, relieving himself. Someone was selling beer out of a cooler, violating about twelve hundred French laws in the act, and someone else had one of those pinball-arcade love-o-meters set up. (Everybody's hand was hot; even an American writer saw his score shoot past "Casanova" and all the way up to "Chaud Lapin"—"Hot Rabbit!") Kids were singing; men were grabbing politely at girls, presumably with a memory of 1944, when the girls were said to have grabbed back. This time, they didn't, but it didn't matter.

Many people had talked a lot about the ethnic mix of the French team, which was composed of players of Algerian, Basque, and Ghanaian descent, among others, but the players them-

selves seemed a lot less self-conscious about this than journalists did. French identity is not that hard to achieve; if you speak French, you feel French. What is hard for an immigrant or an outsider in France to achieve is French institutional acceptance, a place in the crowded, ancient French iconography. The faces you saw on the World Cup team—the faces of Zidane and Djorkaeff and Karembeu—are already part of French society. They just hadn't been integrated before into the French self-image, and now they were.

It's natural for people to hope that the victory of a multiracial team might be the beginning of the end of Le Pen and the racist National Front, but it probably won't be. The ability of sports to solve social problems is limited—the Dream Team didn't change black income levels—and, anyway, Le Pen blandly claimed the victory for himself. It was a reassertion of French glory, he said, and who is more glorious about France than he? The logic of nationalism always flows downhill, toward the gutter.

The real victory on Sunday night was a victory for disorder, an unexpected blessing, bonking the head of an unprepared population. On that long, beautiful walk, there's a moment



when you arrive at the gate of the Tuileries and, for the first time, see the expanse of the Champs-Élysées. On Sunday, you expected to see what you always see: a line of red car lights going up the right side of the Champs, and a line of white lights running down the left—two perfect, side-by-side mile-long lines of red and white, framed by the Arc de Triomphe. On Sunday night, for the first time that anyone could remember, the two neat columns of light were gone: the Champs, a chaos of people and cars, was a blur of indistinct movement, the lights and colors a smear of milky pink. For once, Paris was all mixed up.

—ADAM GOPNIK

THE BOARDS

Can the quintessential eighties novel make it as a nineties musical?



IT is fourteen years since Jay McInerney's fictionalized chronicle of his clubbing-and-drugging night life, "Bright Lights, Big City," became a best-seller, in which time McInerney's evening excursions have altered somewhat. One recent Monday night, for example, he attended a benefit dinner at Webster Hall, at which a long-haired guitarist with a thick Scottish accent performed three raucous numbers whose subject was McInerney's clubbing-and-drugging night life of fourteen years ago. The event, a fund-raiser for New York Theatre Workshop, was the first public preview of the musical version of "Bright Lights, Big City," which the theatre hopes to stage in February.

"It makes me feel rather old; I start to think maybe it should happen after I'm dead," McInerney, who is forty-three, said later, of his novel's adaptation. On the evening in question, though, he appeared quite lively: he beamed at the stage, while his wife, Helen Bransford—whose own book,



"Welcome to Your Facelift," seems unlikely to be turned into musical theatre—looked very moved as she dabbed at her eyes. ("So her tear ducts are still intact," a guest at a neighboring table noted.)

"Bright Lights" is the first big musical by Paul Scott Goodman, the evening's long-haired guitarist. Goodman, who is thirty-eight, comes from Glasgow, where his parents belonged to what he describes as "Scotland's leading amateur Jewish theatrical group." "My father was into Al Jolson," he explained over lunch. "He got me to black my face and go on the Bar Mitzvah circuit, singing Al Jolson songs followed by 'If I Were a Rich Man.' When I was about seventeen, punk rock happened, and sometime in my twenties I wanted to combine the two: 'Have guitar, write musical.'" The result is songs entitled "Bad Blow" and "Odeon"; McInerney's fictional stand-in, Jamie, has a number about his job as a fact checker at this magazine's fictional stand-in ("It isn't that compelling/checking other people's spelling"). McInerney is acting as an informal consultant to the musical, and he attended a staged reading earlier this year, as did his friends Morgan Entrekin, the publisher of Grove/Atlantic, and Gary Fisketjon, the Knopf editor, who are reputed to have served as models for Tad Allagash, Jamie's louche, druggy, Mephistophelian best friend. Tad sings lines like "*Cherchez les grammes, man*," and is seen canoodling with two half-naked night-club girls within minutes of the curtain's rising on Act I. "It's got real energy—it reminded me of my youth," said Entrekin, who confirmed that never once did the trio of friends lean back in their booth at Odeon and say to one another, "You know, our lives would make a really great musical." ("Musical theatre? Yikes!" Fisketjon said.)

Goodman said that the translation is obvious. "My show begins with a row of toilet stalls in a club and a lot of people doing drugs, and the guy starts to sing," he explained. "I think a lot of times in musicals the big question is 'Why the hell is he singing?' But if you're in a club, and there's music, it makes sense."

—REBECCA MEAD

THE BENCH

Is Jackie Onassis's favorite designer in danger of being lost in space?



OLEG CASSINI'S first close encounter with things astronomical was in 1961, when he designed the dress that Jackie Kennedy wore on the day Alan Shepard, the first American in space, came to visit the White House. The frock is featured in Cassini's memoir of Jackie, "A Thousand Days of Magic," where the designer characterizes it as "a modified T-shirt look." Now Cassini once again finds himself preoccupied with space travel and T-shirts, though in a rather less glamorous context. Earlier this year, Cassini filed a complaint in the United States District Court in New York against the California Institute of Technology's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, which, under contract from NASA, developed the Cassini Space Probe that was launched Saturn-ward last fall. Cassini isn't as upset about having a \$3.4-billion spaceship share his name as he is about the appearance on the Internet of other hardware—T-shirts, mugs, lapel pins—bearing the word "Cassini" and marketed by a branch of the Jet Propulsion Lab. In his lawsuit, Cassini is arguing that such products infringe upon his trademark. "They should have been more discreet," he said recently from his Seventh Avenue offices. (An argument to dismiss the case on jurisdictional grounds is pending in the courts.)

The spacecraft commemorates Gian Domenico Cassini, the seventeenth-century astronomer who discovered Saturn's four moons. Gian Domenico was, it turns out, an ancestor of Oleg's. "The history of the Cassini family is a very ancient one," Cassini explained. "It was in Italy, France, and even Russia. My grandfather, Arthur Cassini, was the last Russian Ambassador to America, at the time of Roosevelt and McKinley. So there is some ancestral pride." Cassini says he's merely trying to protect his label's integrity: "I believe that when I die my trademark will remain among the very remembered designers, so it has a value, financial and moral."

Since Cassini's suit was filed, the offending merchandise has disappeared

from J.P.L.'s Web site. J.P.L.'s lawyers declined to comment, but George Alexander, a spokesman for J.P.L., said that a Cassini T-shirt and a few lapel pins and mugs were still available in the on-site store.

Cassini says that, if J.P.L. had asked, he's sure they could have come to some arrangement. "If they had called me, and said, 'We are going to have a lot of Cassini products, caps and T-shirts and things, I would have assisted them, as long as my name was associated with them,' he explained. "It would have been good P.R. to involve me." Indeed, the availability in on-line shopping malls of the Oleg Cassini Talking Watch, priced at \$19.95 (which promises to "remind you of important appointments" and offers a choice of three alarms: "rooster, cuckoo, or dee-dee"), suggests that the designer is not above peddling quasi-futuristic gewgaws to the wired masses.

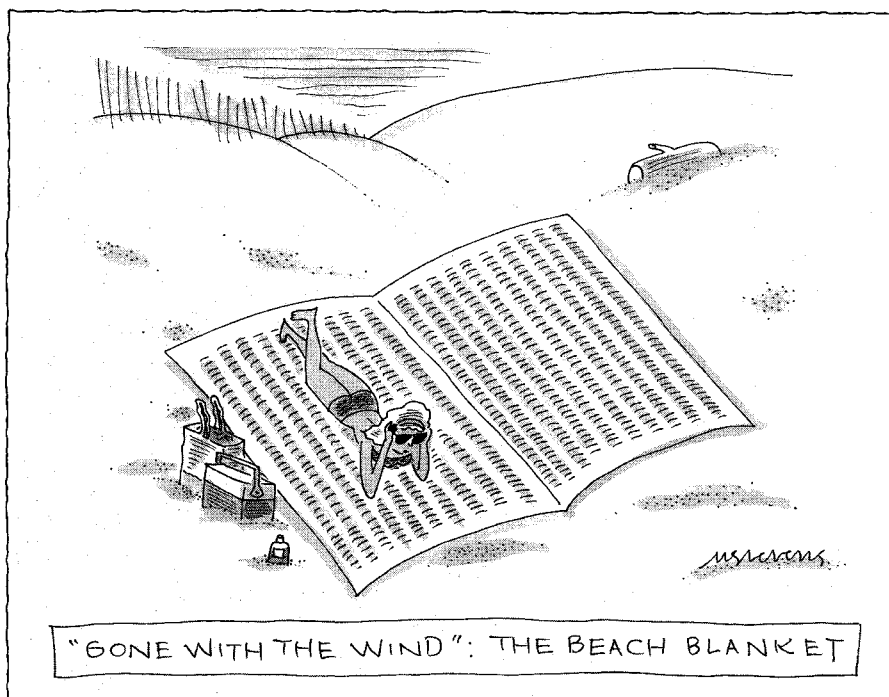
And, it appears, Cassini is already something of a space cadet. "Next time, I think they should ask me to be aboard," he joked. "I could be the first designer to go to the moon." And do what, redecorate? "I have skills. In a way, I am an adventurer. When I came to this country, I had a vision: I wanted to be an American, I wanted to design for the movies, I wanted to meet the First Ladies, and it all occurred. So if they offer me a free ticket, I'll accept." —REBECCA MEAD

POSTSCRIPT

Kay Thompson had a whole lot more than "Eloise" going for her.

 NOT unlike Diana Vreeland, the fashion editor she impersonated to superb effect and then some in Stanley Donen's 1957 movie musical, "Funny Face," Kay Thompson, the great singer, vocal arranger, comedian, and creator of the "Eloise" books, had a unique style and way of being. She was a broad broad, with a large mouth, a horse-shaped head, and an athletic frame. She was a different kind of big blonde—a more musical, witty, and butch Eve Arden. No matter what Thompson did, she did it with a grand, I'm-still-here flourish.

Thompson died earlier this month,

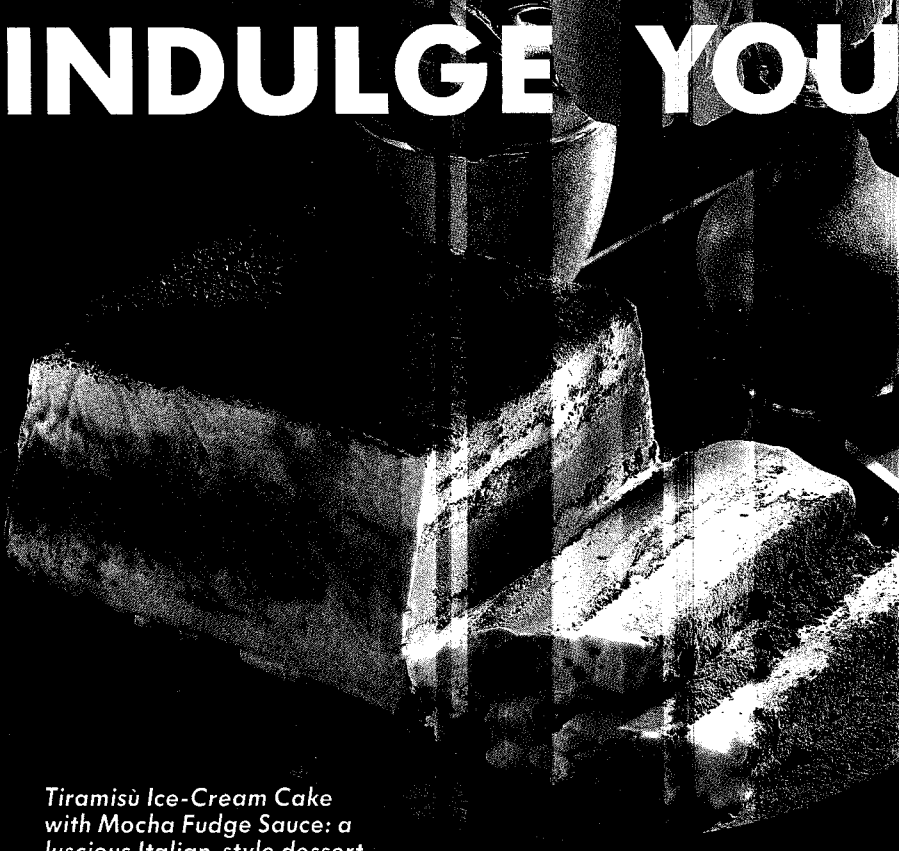


at the age of ninety-five, and the facts of her life are sketchy (which is appropriate, since she was entirely self-created). Born in St. Louis, Thompson, who was christened Kitty Fink, attended the same high school as Tennessee Williams. (Imagine what a superb Alexandra del Lago she would have made in Williams's "Sweet Bird of Youth.") She was something of a prodigy on the piano, performing with the St. Louis Symphony when she was fifteen. At seventeen, she moved to California to pursue her dream of becoming a star; she supported herself there by giving diving lessons. Other particulars of the Thompson legend include: being fired, in 1937, from the Harold Arlen musical "Hooray for What!," because she wasn't "sexy" enough; and being fired by the bandleader and composer André Kostelanetz—Alice Faye replaced her—presumably because she wasn't pretty enough. (An early profile of Thompson that appeared in *Radio Guide* bore the title "Ugly Ducklings Can Have Beaux.") But Thompson possessed skills that didn't depend on anyone's reaction to her looks. She was a superb vocal arranger. In the mid-nineteen-forties, she was invited to work at M-G-M, in the producer Arthur Freed's unit. There Thompson coached Lena Horne (who credits Thompson with making her sound bigger) and Judy Garland (whose big sound she made more subtle). When Thompson

left M-G-M, in 1947, it was to perform in a night-club act that she devised for herself, with the singer Andy Williams and his brothers as backup. The act constituted Thompson's relatively brief foray into stardom, apart from her lasting fame as the author of the four "Eloise" stories.

While Thompson appeared in only one other film after "Funny Face"—Otto Preminger's 1970 "Tell Me That You Love Me, Junie Moon," starring her goddaughter, Liza Minnelli—it is largely through "Funny Face" that Thompson the performer is remembered today. Thompson's Maggie Prescott steals the film from Fred Astaire and Audrey Hepburn, simply because Thompson is not as careful a performer. She grabs our attention not through charm but by speaking too loudly, gesticulating too grandly, and, one imagines, sucking all the perfumed air out of her lavish fashion editor's office, particularly when she admonishes women everywhere to "banish the black, burn the blue, and bury the beige. From now on, girls, think pink!" Certainly by now many of the film's fans think of it as part of Thompson's oeuvre, rather than Astaire's or Hepburn's. People still root for Thompson as she careers through the streets of Paris projecting nothing but "bazazz!," which is the verbal flag that ugly ducklings enjoy waving in the banal face of convention. —HILTON ALS

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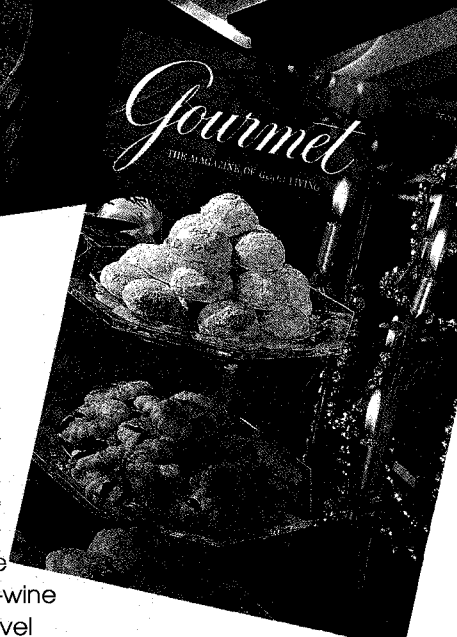
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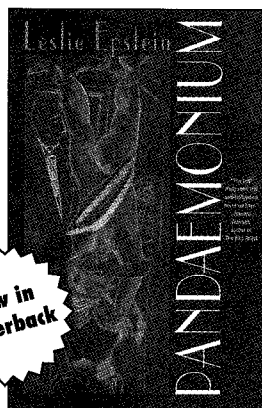
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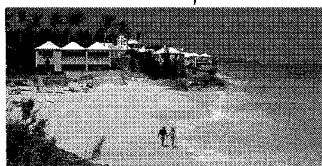
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ANNALS OF COMMUNICATIONS

THE INVISIBLE MANAGER

*Can the reclusive executive who helped bring back the
N.F.L.—and is pushing Howard Stern—reinvent CBS?*

BY KEN AULETTA

NOT long ago, Mel Karmazin, the president and chief operating officer of CBS, got a call from Rupert Murdoch, the owner of the Fox network and the chairman and C.E.O. of the News Corporation. "I wanted to introduce myself," Murdoch reportedly said. "We've never met, but I'm looking forward to meeting you."

Karmazin's reply: "Rupert, we've met three times. I just wasn't important, so you don't remember me."

Karmazin, who is fifty-four, has not put much effort into making himself memorable. The walls of his office are not filled with industry testimonials or photographs. He has few social engagements; most nights, he walks to his apartment, on Central Park South, and orders pizza. He is so private that, several years ago, friends did not know he had separated from his wife. His contracts with Howard Stern and Don Imus stipulate that they not mention his name on their programs. Don Hewitt, the founder and executive producer of "60 Minutes," says, "If someone asked me two years ago 'Who the hell is Mel Karmazin?' I wouldn't have known."

As for Murdoch, Karmazin says that he was "very gracious," but Karmazin has not pursued the invitation, because, he says, "there's nothing to meet about." Murdoch, he points out, is neither an advertiser nor a shareholder; if he were, the call would have been "important to my life and the company." Instead, Karmazin says simply, "I'm not a schmoozer." What he doesn't need to point out is that he is considered the likely successor to Michael H. Jordan, the CBS Corporation's chairman and C.E.O.

Karmazin, a pear-shaped man with fluffy white hair and a tanned, round face, is described by a close friend as "a working machine." He does not play golf or tennis or get lost in big books. By his own count, he has not taken

more than a five-day vacation since 1976, and he says that he went stir crazy at his beach house, on the Jersey Shore, over the July 4th weekend. "This is relaxing," he says of work in the office, where his days often begin at 6 A.M.

"He has not an ounce of poetry, yet he is a beguiling figure," says the radio personality and novelist Jonathan Schwartz, who worked under Karmazin at WNEW in the mid-seventies. "He has unusual, almost theatrical energy. Because he's in such control of any conversation, he pays no real attention to subtle manners of exchange. Like punctuation. You feel that any conversation with him is already on its way to conclusion. So if there's a point you want to make you know you have little time. Around Mel there is an immense twenty-four-second clock."

Karmazin does have a get-to-the-point impatience. He rarely grants interviews; when I first pressed him for a meeting, he asked, "What would it do for my stock?" He grills everyone. The CBS anchor Dan Rather says, "He is like a fighter who is always cutting the size of the ring on you. He corners you quickly."

Those who find themselves cornered by Mel Karmazin quickly realize that his vision of CBS is quite different from that of his predecessors. For Karmazin, the CBS that William Paley founded and that was once known as the Tiffany network—home to people like Edward R. Murrow and Lucille Ball—is history. He believes that the future is in the local stations, all of them profitable; the network will continue to play its traditional role—providing programming to affiliates and local CBS-owned stations—and to earn most of its revenue from national advertising. The CBS network earned more than three billion dollars last year, but actually lost money. (Of the four networks, only NBC earned a profit in 1997.)

With this approach, ever since his arrival, in January of 1997, Karmazin has had a dramatic effect on CBS. The company's stock price has climbed each time C.E.O. Michael Jordan has given him more authority. To CBS insiders, however, Karmazin's ways have sometimes been alarming. "I wish I could convince the board to change the name of the company from CBS—the stock would be up to fifty dollars," Karmazin told an investor conference in early June. Some of Karmazin's decisions, such as syndicating a Howard Stern show to compete against NBC's "Saturday Night Live," have enraged those who still invoke the Tiffany tradition. Frank Stanton, now ninety, who was president and then vice-chairman of CBS from 1946 to 1973, says, "It's so contrary to the standards we fought to maintain."

CBS, to be sure, still attracts stars and media attention, as it did in Stanton's era. According to Jordan, ninety per cent of CBS's profits come from the radio and television stations that CBS owns and operates—which is Karmazin's domain. When Jordan hears the phrase "Tiffany network," his bushy eyebrows lift and his teeth grind. "It's a nice sort of historical thing, but it implies either turn-of-the-century Art Deco or a complacency and an unwillingness to change," he says. "Yes, we want to hold on to journalistic and other standards. But I don't aspire to that Paleyesque role. This is a business."

IN a sense, the recent history of CBS—and the rise of Mel Karmazin—began in 1993, when Jordan, after a career at places like PepsiCo and its Frito-Lay division and McKinsey & Co., became the chairman and C.E.O. of the Westinghouse Electric Corporation. The Pittsburgh-based company had two essential parts: a second-tier defense-and-technology business and a cluster of radio and TV stations known as Group W. Jordan set out to reduce the company's fifteen-billion-dollar debt, and ultimately urged his

board to concentrate on broadcasting, a business in which he was a neophyte.

In November of 1995, Westinghouse bought CBS, for \$5.4 billion. "We really didn't understand the network business," Jordan says. "We acquired CBS for the stations, not the network. They were the great hidden asset." Jordan moved into



Mel Karmazin, the president, and Michael Jordan, the C.E.O., are seen as opposite types within CBS.

the same corner suite, on the thirty-fifth floor of the so-called Black Rock building, on West Fifty-second Street, that had belonged to William Paley. He also spent a good deal of that first year in Pittsburgh, or at homes he has in Dallas and Santa Fe. He rarely talked to the press or to many employees.

Jordan's growth strategy was a local one. This became clearer in December of 1996, when Westinghouse/CBS paid \$4.9 billion for the Infinity Broadcasting Corporation, forging a combined radio group that consisted of seventy-nine stations, sixty-four of them in the top ten markets. Infinity's president and chief executive officer was Mel Karmazin, and Jordan announced that

Karmazin would run the combined CBS radio group, join the Westinghouse/CBS board, and become his largest individual shareholder.

What Karmazin and Jordan shared was a belief that the federal government would ease regulatory restrictions on media companies, such as the number of radio stations a company could own, and when this happened, they believed, size would confer leverage over advertisers and allow the company to streamline costs and enhance revenue. Karmazin, more than Jordan, was viewed by Wall Street as a champion of shareholders. (People knew that he had been reared in a Queens housing project by a father who drove a cab and a mother who worked in a curtain-rod factory. He attended Pace College at night, working days at an advertising agency.) He showed that he was willing to pay for talent, as he did for Imus, when he ran Infinity. Investors were also reassured by the fact that he sacked managers who did not meet budget goals, and that he refused to hear that managers were victims of a recession or of a strong competitor: hence the one sign in his office—a variation on the international "No Smoking" sign, with the line, in this case, drawn through the word "Excuses." The payoff for Infinity shareholders was that its stock price climbed nearly sixty per cent in each of the four

years between the company's going public, in 1992, and its sale to Westinghouse/CBS, in 1996.

By the end of 1997, Westinghouse had changed its name to the CBS Corporation. At the same time, the company announced that it would buy American Radio Systems, for \$2.6 billion, which would expand the radio group to approximately a hundred and seventy-five stations. The networks, though, were clearly suffering. In the 1979-80 season, ninety per cent of viewers regularly watched a prime-time show on one of three networks, while at the end of the 1997-98 season less than sixty per cent did. With fewer viewers, it was more difficult to attract enough people to sample new shows;

the result was fewer hits, which accelerated the erosion of network viewership.

In January of 1998, CBS agreed to pay five hundred million dollars a year for the next eight years to televise a package of National Football League games. The price was steep—about twice what NBC paid under the previous contract—but Jordan and Karmazin, typically, were thinking about the stations and the demographics. The average age of the CBS viewer is just over fifty, a dozen or so years older than the average NBC or ABC viewer and twenty years older than the average Fox viewer. Jordan says, “The average viewer age went up five years when we lost the N.F.L.”—in 1994, when Fox outbid CBS.

THIS past April, Karmazin became both president and chief operating officer of the company, and Leslie Moonves, who had joined CBS just months before Westinghouse acquired it, was named president and C.E.O. of CBS Television, which put him in charge of sports, news, and entertainment. Again, CBS's stock price rose; Karmazin, not Jordan, was cheered at the annual CBS shareholders' meeting.

Karmazin has not been involved in programming decisions, although he is often blunt in his opinions. Over the past few seasons, Moonves made some

high-priced gambles—on shows with Tom Selleck, Ted Danson and Mary Steenburgen, and Danny Aiello—and they failed. In over-all viewership, in 1997 CBS came in second to NBC for the second year in a row, but the network was fourth in attracting the most desirable age group (eighteen to forty-nine).

Karmazin stayed away as Moonves and other executives planned the 1998-1999 season, and some of the strategic differences between the stations and the network emerged. Jonathan Klein, the executive in charge of the fourteen CBS-owned stations—all in major markets—was given a larger voice in planning the new schedule, and he pushed for urban shows. “I wanted no more Winnebagos on CBS,” he says.

A big debate this year was over whether to grant a second season to Steven Bochco's “Brooklyn South,” a police show from the creator of such hits as “NYPD Blue” and “Hill Street Blues.” Two years ago, CBS lured Bochco away from ABC with a contract that made them partners, giving CBS exclusive rights to three of Bochco's creations. But the Monday-night drama reached just over twelve per cent of all possible viewers when it premiered, in September of 1997, and steadily fell to less than half that num-

ber by the following April. Bochco lobbied hard to keep the show on the air, promising that he would personally help shape most of the second-season episodes.

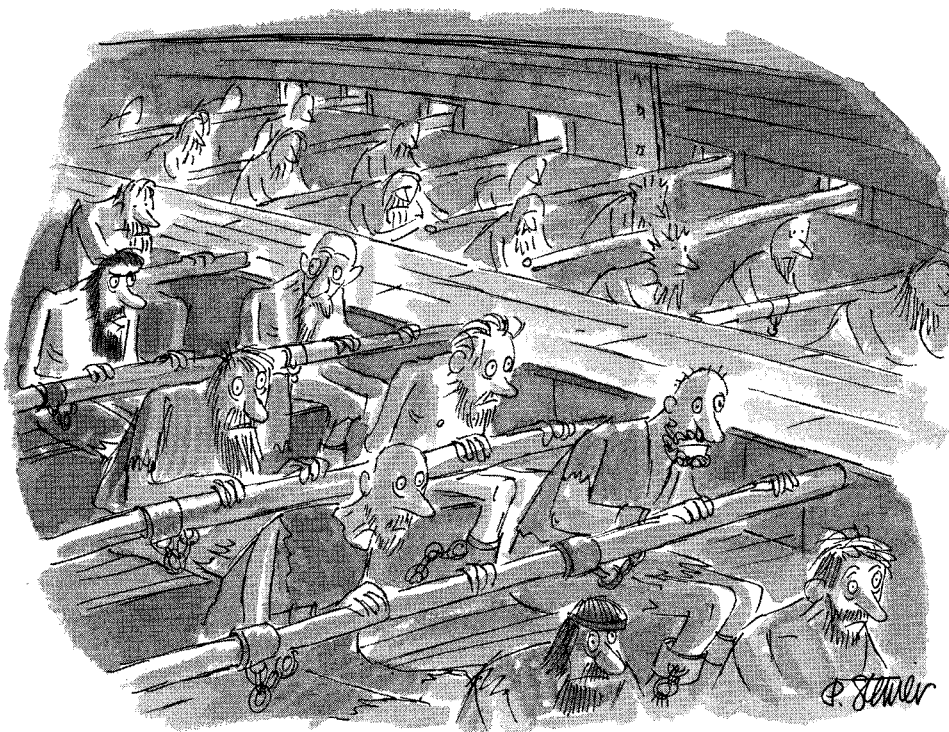
Despite these assurances, the show was cancelled. Moonves says, “The show did get better,” and adds, “It was a very difficult decision,” but he feels that he was left no choice when the audience kept shrinking. Bochco said that he had to call Moonves for two days straight before he finally got the bad news. He contrasted Moonves with NBC's Fred Silverman, who kept “Hill Street Blues” on the air in 1981 after a dismal first season because “he believed in the show.” “What I see is a desire to get big ratings fast and, if they don't get them, move on,” Bochco told me. “That seems not to acknowledge the possibility of shows improving in the hands of writers and producers they believe in. If Les had said to me three, four months ago, ‘I don't like the show,’ I might have had my feelings hurt but I'd understand. What I was hearing was ‘The show is getting better.’”

Bochco seemed to take the rejection personally. “I said to Les, ‘I'm not a supplier. I'm not a guy who comes in with a sample case and says, ‘Buy this show. Buy this show.’’ I'm a tiny little company in partnership with a network.

I'm not saying that what I do is better, but it's more personal. We sort of handcraft this stuff. When I go in to my partner, I'm not talking as a salesman but as a guy who writes it and produces it and casts it.”

Though Bochco's contract officially requires the development of two more programs, he says, “I've expressed to Les some very serious misgivings about our professional relationship. . . . I'm not sure he can do anything that would alter my feeling about the seriousness of our problem.” Moonves disputes Bochco's account and says, “I look forward to doing two more seasons with him.”

IN the spring, a dispute arose between CBS management and “60 Minutes.” Moonves let it be known that he and his colleagues, looking at NBC's ratings success with “Dateline,” a magazine show that aired on four nights, wanted to extend the most successful TV-



"I'm sorry, but nine Greek islands in seven days is just too much."

magazine brand—"60 Minutes"—to at least two nights. One "60 Minutes" correspondent, who requested anonymity, expressed concern that the idea was being promoted by businessmen enamored of the concept of "brands," and that pushing for a second night risked diluting the brand.

The issue simmered for a while, then came to a head in May at an eightieth-birthday lunch for Mike Wallace given by Moonves and Michael Jordan in the upstairs room at Patroon, a midtown restaurant. The guests included the five correspondents; Andy Rooney; the executive producer, Don Hewitt; and several other producers. (The CBS News president, Andrew Heyward, did not attend, because he was on jury duty.) In the middle of the table was a large tennis ball—Wallace is a fervent tennis player. As Hewitt remembers, Wallace asked, "Is this a proper time to bring up what's on all of our minds?"

"No, but go ahead," Moonves said with a smile.

"Instead of that tennis ball on the table, everyone knows it's an elephant," Wallace recalls saying. "Everyone knows it's there, and no one wants to talk about it."

So for the rest of the lunch they did. "We got into it," says Moonves, who did most of the talking for the network, and seemed unmoved. When Wallace wanted to appeal this move, though, he didn't call C.E.O. Jordan. He phoned Mel Karmazin, who came to the "60 Minutes" offices for a June 8th meeting. Soon afterward, Hewitt, who had assured the press that he had yet to sign off on a second "60 Minutes," was calling colleagues with strategic concepts for a second show. Last week, CBS announced that "60 Minutes II" will debut in early 1999.

THE relationship between Karmazin and Jordan is a great subject of rumors around CBS. "My suspicion is that it's peaceful coexistence," a Jordan friend suggests. The two men are not intimates. They talk or meet for an average of about three hours a week, Karmazin says, and he admits that he knows "very little" about Jordan, who, like Karmazin, grew up in modest circumstances. He praises Jordan and complains, "Mike is the C.E.O. of the company and should

get more credit" for CBS's successes. Yet he also says that he is pretty much free to do what he wants: "I can't think of anything I wanted to do that Mike didn't want me to do."

Jordan often talks with his arms folded; Karmazin is usually in motion. "Mel pushes," Jordan observes. "He's a guy who pushes and challenges everything. I'm more of a selective pusher. And maybe a little better listener." He keeps a distance, focusses on corporate strategy. Roger Altman, whose Evercore Partners has often served as an investment-banking adviser to CBS, says of Jordan, "I don't see many C.E.O.s who control their ego as he does. He has a quiet sense of self-confidence." Karmazin inspects every detail. "If you're going to jump out of an airplane, you want to pack your own parachute," he told me.

Jordan and Karmazin say they are optimistic about CBS's future, yet when CBS's stock dipped from thirty-six dollars to thirty dollars a share at the end of May, Jordan told the *Wall Street Journal*, "The network is such a minuscule piece of our business." This quote was circulated among alarmed CBS employees. "The rumor around here is that they'd like to sell the network and keep the stations," Don Hewitt told me in mid-June. The seventy-five-year-old impresario of "60 Minutes" says that in fifty years at CBS, "I don't remember anyone who runs a network saying something like that."

Asked about this, Jordan responded, "The network, in our mind, is vital to the development of the money-making part of our business, which is the stations." Karmazin says, "When the worst CBS programs reach five times the audience of the highest-rated cable network, you have a vehicle that is very desirable to advertisers."

Frank Stanton, the former president of CBS, acknowledges that he "never had to face" the broadcast and cable and Internet competition that the networks do today. But he believes that by positioning itself as a station-driven company CBS will find it more difficult to attract talent. Success, he thinks, means taking risks. "That's what drove General Sarnoff of NBC crazy. He was an engineer. That's why he lost Jack

Benny to CBS"—along with "Amos 'n' Andy," Red Skelton, and Edgar Bergen.

Moonves declares that CBS has to "grow our revenue sources"—for example, by figuring out ways to sell merchandise off its shows. In addition, the twenty-seven-year-old federal rules preventing the networks from owning and syndicating shows were relaxed in 1995. It is no coincidence that CBS has a financial interest in six of the seven CBS shows that will debut in the fall season. The other networks have been similarly involved.

Another strategy to improve revenues is to diversify. ABC and NBC have done this smartly with such successful cable ventures as ESPN and CNBC, respectively, but CBS, which under William Paley was an early investor in cable, abandoned the business before it grew. Under Jordan, CBS has bought two successful cable networks: TNN, The Nashville Network, and CMT, Country Music Television. When I asked Karmazin what he would say to those who claim that CBS has too much invested in over-the-air broadcasting, he controlled his urge to jump up from the conference table and said, "I think we're the best-positioned media company out there. We have assets that generate tremendous free cash flow—over a billion dollars from our radio group, over eight hundred million dollars from television and from our cable group."

As Jordan, the C.E.O., sees it, "This is more like running Frito-Lay. You're selling the consumer and deciding whether to spend a hundred million dollars to launch a product and deciding, Will this succeed?" Jordan, who is sixty-two, is silent about whether he will retire before he turns sixty-five. Will Karmazin be his successor? "We're certainly fortunate—and I told the board that—to have a person of that calibre," he says.

One Jordan adviser thinks that the succession will come fairly soon. "I think that in about a year from now Karmazin will be the C.E.O.," this person said. When I asked Karmazin if he expected to be the next C.E.O. of CBS, he looked startled. "I don't know," he said. "It's not something I want to be." He doesn't need to be, one intimate says, "as long as he can do what he needs to do. But I think Mel doesn't feel he can do everything he wants to do." ♦



ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

THEATRE OF WAR

The risks Steven Spielberg takes in his film about the invasion of Normandy are moral as well as commercial.

BY HENDRIK HERTZBERG

AT the age of twelve or thirteen, I read Erich Maria Remarque's "All Quiet on the Western Front," the great novel of the First World War, published in 1928. One passage made an especially powerful impression. It comes in the midst of a nameless battle, one of the novel's (and the war's) many lethal and meaningless struggles over a few hundred yards of bomb-churned earth. The troops have just gone over the top and are charging toward the enemy trenches. The narrator, a young German soldier, glances over his shoulder and sees that a lance corporal running next to him has just had his head sheared off by a shell. But the man does not fall, not right away: "He runs a few steps more while the blood spouts from his neck like a fountain."

This terrible image disturbed my sleep and my calm for days, and for many years afterward that headless, running, spouting man often flashed into my mind's eye. Recently, I remembered him again, along with the agitation and dread he originally provoked, because "Saving Private Ryan," Steven Spielberg's new film about the invasion of Normandy during the Second World War, has left me feeling a similar disquiet.

The feeling may be the same; everything else, however, is different, and the difference is more than just the stretch of time between youth and age. In the interim, there has been a change in the cultural valence of violence. Forty years ago, mass violence—the really

big kind, the brand of mechanized slaughter for which the whole world would mobilize—was both a recent memory (Pearl Harbor was only about as far back in time then as Reaganomics is now) and a palpable threat



Tom Hanks, the star, and Spielberg, whose interest in his father's war is not new. Drawing by Bill Mauldin.

(schoolchildren were routinely obliged to cower under their desks, rehearsing for nuclear Armageddon). Now the idea of global war seems wildly implausible. Even "limited" war—meaning the kind in which the casualties are measured in the thousands or hundreds of thousands rather than in the millions—is a distant prospect as far as Americans are concerned. War is a bad thing that happens to other people, when it happens at all. And violent crime, war's small-scale simulacrum, is on

the decline, at least in this country. With the apocalypse in full retreat, fears of post-apocalyptic chaos are fading, too.

But if actual violence is ever rarer and more notional, represented violence is ever more ubiquitous and graphic. At mid-century, the conventions of movie gunplay seldom required more than a "bang," followed by the bad guy (or subsidiary good guy) clapping his hand to his chest, saying "Unnh," and falling down decorously. Since then, we've all been subjected to a desensitization program of forty-odd years' duration and mounting intensity. The biff-pow violence of the old Saturday movie matinee, propagated exponentially by television, is now the zero point—the visual white noise of every home. Mock mayhem, mass-produced and blandly packaged, fills the psychic space once occupied by silence. And for the price of a multiplex ticket or a video rental we can treat ourselves to stronger fare, something akin to an afternoon at the Roman games during the reign of Trajan. We are benumbed, so much so that to produce the emotional impact that once could be achieved by a few lines of type in a paperback now requires the services of armies, so to speak, of technicians and skilled craftsmen.

Steven Spielberg is now in his early fifties, and his life as a moviegoer and moviemaker has spanned these changes. During a recent conversation about violence and war, which took place in the incongruous setting of a modest, cheerful restaurant a mile or so from his house in East Hampton, Long Island, he spoke of his own "journey into desensitization," as he wryly called it. "I remember the first upsetting image I ever saw," he said. "On Saturdays, as a seven-year-old in Haddonfield, New Jersey, I used to sneak out and go to movies my parents had forbidden me to see, potboilers mostly. In one of them—I don't remember the name of it—an assassin is standing behind a door. He hears two people talking, takes a hand drill out of his pocket, and drills a hole in the door. He has a cane, and he unscrews the end of it, pulls out a long, thin blade, and sticks the blade through the hole he has drilled. One drop of blood comes dripping down the white door. That image kept me

awake for two months—and it was something that happened off camera.

"Then, as movies became more and more candid about violence, the violence went from off camera to on camera. There's a long gulf between the drop of blood on the white door and 'The Wild Bunch'—Sam Peckinpah's 1969 blood ballet—"which was the first time I was truly grossed out, though I understood that it was done stylistically, in slow motion. I had seen blood bags used before, but not like this. 'The Wild Bunch' was a watershed. After it came out, more and more films imitated its use of violence—the cousins and nephews of 'The Wild Bunch.'"

In "Saving Private Ryan," which is surely one of the most sanguinary pictures ever made by a big Hollywood studio, Spielberg takes (and enlarges) an arsenal of filmmaking techniques that have been developed mostly in the service of sensation and mindless spectacle (the fireballs, the blood bags, the gory prostheses, the plastic and animal viscera, the earsplitting, digitally enhanced noise) and turns it toward a quite different purpose—authenticity, in the re-creation of a great and terrible historical episode. The technical credits for "Saving Private Ryan" list some five hundred people, from carpenters to "Corpse and Animal Effects Designers." What they have accomplished, under Spielberg's direction, merits comparison with what Remarque accomplished with pen and paper.

After a brief, tranquil introduction, set in the present, "Saving Private Ryan" transports us directly into the wrenching terror of Omaha Beach on D Day—June 6, 1944. We are in a landing craft, hearing the grinding of its engines and feeling the swell of the sea, with a group of silent men—some of them puking, as much from fear as from seasickness, others praying, all of them tense and subdued. They are long past banter or bravado. When the ramp goes down, we go with them into the maelstrom of water and metal.

In movie sequences of this kind, we are accustomed to some sort of relief. The camera may cut away for a moment to a scene at headquarters or on the bridge of a ship offshore, or there will be an aerial view, an "establishing shot" from above—something, anything, to

suggest that someone, somewhere (even if only the crane operator and the camera crew), might be safe. Here Spielberg offers no such reassurance. The camera is never more than three feet off the ground as the soldiers clamber up the beachhead. The only moments of respite, such as they are, are analogues of what the soldiers might have experienced themselves. We are plunged into the water, so that the sound of battle is muffled and the movements of men and bullets eerily slowed; but then we break the surface again. Or we are momentarily deafened by an explosion. Or we go into shock with a character, briefly sharing his narrowed consciousness and hearing the sounds of bullets clanging and men screaming as an undifferentiated roar. One shifts in one's seat, turning this way and that, but there is no escape. This sequence, which lasts for twenty-five minutes, may be the most harrowing depiction of battle ever put on screen. "I'm asking the audience—and it's a lot to ask of an audience—to have a physical experience, so that they can somewhat have the experience of what those guys actually went through," Spielberg said.

Spielberg has long had something of a reputation as a director whose movies reflect and refract other movies, rather than unmediated experience. At its worst, this can lead to a kind of adolescent solipsism. Here, though, his cinephile instincts have actually helped him to sidestep the conventions of Hollywood war movies, by supplanting their mode of representation with another: that of actual combat photography. The idea, Spielberg told me, was to make it seem as if the sequence had been shot under the conditions it depicts. "It's not just the carnage—the leg off here, the arm off there," he explained. "It's the cumulative effect of the shaky hand-held camera, the uncoated lenses, the desaturated color, which makes you feel like it's fifty years ago. We used a forty-five-degree open shutter, which is what the combat cameramen had in their open-shuttered Bell & Howells in 1944. Nothing blurs: when you see an explosion, you see every grain of sand. It's an accumulation of sounds and sights."

Spielberg's rule, he said, was to make it seem as if his camera operators were

**Lewd politicians,
double-dealing reporters,
cynical spin doctors....
Yes, it's fiction.**



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trying not to get killed. They stay low to the ground, and you can feel them flinch when a shell bursts nearby. The lenses get spattered with water, blood, and sand. German pillboxes and muzzle flashes are seen on the run, as if out of the corner of an eye fixed on the next place of cover. The tension between panic and duty grips the viewer as well as those who are viewed.

I asked Spielberg about how veterans of D Day to whom he has shown "Saving Private Ryan" have reacted, especially in comparison with how survivors reacted to his 1993 Holocaust drama, "Schindler's List." He replied, "Every survivor who saw 'Schindler's List' said, 'Thank you for making this movie, but it was so much worse.' A lot of the veterans, too, are saying, 'Thank you, but it was worse.' But, yes, fewer of the veterans are saying that than the Holocaust survivors. You can get closer to combat, because combat is a physical clashing of projectiles moving in opposite directions. Many of the soldiers who came off the landing craft were killed instantly, or died horribly from their wounds. But a lot of them survived, and almost all of them thought they had a chance." Spielberg paused, and then added, "I believe that the Holocaust is ineffable. I do not believe that combat is."

THE Second World War has been a preoccupation of Spielberg's for a long time. As a movie-crazed teen-ager he made a forty-minute, 8-mm., color silent picture called "Escape to Nowhere," about a battle in North Africa,

and won first prize in a statewide amateur film contest. In one way or another, no fewer than six of the twenty feature films he has directed—including "1941," "Empire of the Sun," "Raiders of the Lost Ark" and one of the two other Indiana Jones pictures, and, of course, "Schindler's List"—have been directly or indirectly about the war. Even "Close Encounters of the Third Kind," Spielberg's openhearted U.F.O. epic, begins with a squadron of Second World War bombers mysteriously turning up in the present-day Mexican desert.

The filmmaker must have been thinking of his father—Arnold Spielberg, who is now eighty-one years old and is retired from a career as a pioneering computer engineer—when he conceived that scene, and was certainly thinking of him throughout the making of "Saving Private Ryan." During the war, Steven Spielberg said, "my father was a radioman on a B-25 and was in charge of the fifty-calibre machine gun over his head. He only got in one combat mission—most of the time he was with a group flying supplies between the British and the Americans in Burma. He used to have reunions with his friends when I was growing up. They'd all tell war stories, and they were horrifying. I kept wondering, How come movies haven't done it that way, if that's what really happened? You hear from a veteran what it was like, and then you see Hollywood's version of what it was like, and for many years I believed Hollywood."

What makes "Saving Private Ryan" utterly distinctive is the sense that it has

no agenda other than to capture the experience of being a combat soldier in the last global war. The imagery is heavy, but not with ideology: you never feel Meaning place a hand on your shoulder, propelling you this way or that. "This war has not really been explored on film except with ulterior motives," Spielberg told me. "During the war itself, it was explored for purposes of bolstering the home front, or encouraging enlistment, or selling War Bonds. When the picture was over—after 'The End'—you'd have the emblem of the little minuteman standing sentinel and 'Buy your War Bonds at this theatre.' You'd only do a low shot if the soldier is standing, so he can tower magnificently above you. Soldiers die with lovely last words that sound like they were written by poets. The gunfire is never loud enough, the damage is never honest enough—all because the purpose is to do everything about the war except tell you what it was like to be in one. During the nineteen-sixties, in films like 'Kelly's Heroes,' 'The Great Escape,' 'Where Eagles Dare,' World War II is simply an excuse for adventure. In my own 'Raiders' films, the incidents of Germans in Africa were just a way to give Indiana Jones villains I couldn't be criticized for killing."

"Saving Private Ryan" has action and it has adventure, but it will never be mistaken for an action-adventure film. Nor is it, strictly speaking, an entertainment; the responses it provokes are too discomfiting for that. Is it an antiwar film? Spielberg's answer to the question is convolutedly precise: "I think it's an antiwar film only in that if you want to go to war after seeing this picture, then it's not an antiwar film." If another big war were in prospect—as one was when Remarque wrote "All Quiet on the Western Front"—then "Saving Private Ryan" would be, if not actively subversive, at the very least an obstacle to military recruitment. But "Saving Private Ryan" is not a protest against something that is about to happen, or that evil forces (governments, munitions barons, jingoists) are trying to make happen. It is not an angry or despairing indictment like the Vietnam films of Oliver Stone

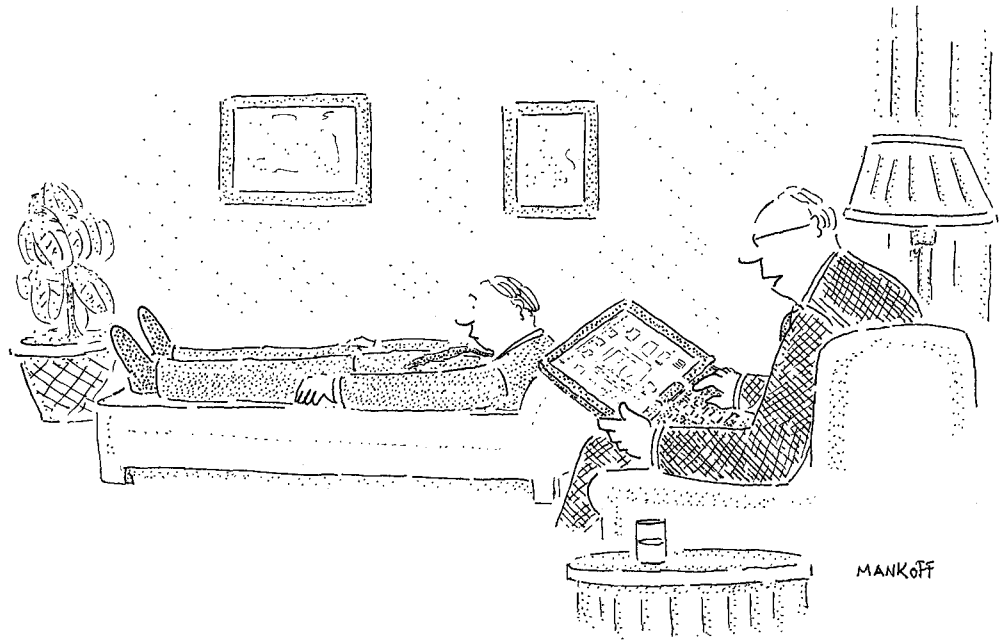


"Hi. This is Ed, over at the I.R.S., just checking to see how you're feeling after your audit."

("Platoon"), Francis Ford Coppola ("Apocalypse Now"), Michael Cimino ("The Deer Hunter"), Stanley Kubrick ("Full Metal Jacket"), or Brian De Palma ("Casualties of War")—though without Vietnam and the bitter films it inspired, "Saving Private Ryan" would not have been thinkable.

The movie takes the justice of the Second World War as a given, but innocence is not thereby conferred on the men who fight on justice's side. The only acts of cowardice and cruelty we see are committed by Americans. There is no effort to demonize the Germans, who are shown as soldiers trying to do what soldiers do (and who in any case are not always Germans; many of the Wehrmacht troops at Normandy were Estonians or Poles serving under German noncommissioned officers). The black-and-red iconography of Nazi evil is absent. The movie introduces ambiguity into its moral calculus by making the particular mission its characters are assigned to carry out—after the battle at Omaha Beach, they are commanded to risk their lives again in order to find and send home a soldier whose three brothers have been killed in action—a dubious one. Captain Miller, the platoon leader, played by Tom Hanks, calls it a "public-relations stunt," and the movie never really insists—as I see it, at least—that the mission's success fully redeems the sacrifices it entails.

"Saving Private Ryan" is not quite a great film. A battle sequence at the movie's end, which is almost exactly the same length as the one at the beginning, seems a little too orderly in the way it ties up loose ends, a little untrue to the chaos and extremity of its opening counterpart. Though Spielberg does unexpected things with the character clichés he employs—in the end, the bookish clerk does not summon up his courage after all—they are clichés nonetheless. But the immensely powerful, perfectly paced opening set piece of "Saving Private Ryan" may be looked back upon as one of the greatest sequences in the history of cinema—and its mood of dazed, jittery grief persists



"Oops! I just deleted all your files. Can you repeat everything you've ever told me?"

for the remaining two hours of the movie and, indeed, long after one has left the theatre.

Spielberg, who has had a hand in seven of the twenty most lucrative films ever made, does not expect this one to join the list. He told me that he doesn't think "Saving Private Ryan" is suitable for anyone under fifteen years old, and that he will devote his promotional efforts on its behalf partly to urging parents to keep their kids away from it. (Teen-agers, of course, are the stuff of which blockbusters are made.) His own children—including the eldest, Max, who is thirteen, and who spent a good deal of time on the set—will not be permitted to see it.

"When you see the box-office returns, you'll understand what I mean when I say there's no ulterior motive," Spielberg told me with a wan smile. His gamble is moral as well as commercial. What if "Saving Private Ryan" ends up further coarsening the vocabulary of violence for films with less lofty goals? Spielberg said he doesn't think that that will happen. Even though many of the boys who died at Omaha Beach were seventeen years old themselves, he said, he would have accepted a rating of NC17—no one under seventeen admitted—for "Saving Private Ryan," and he added that he thinks

(and hopes) that a similarly violent work of pure fantasy would be so rated. Whether he's right or wrong about that, it's hard to see how "Saving Private Ryan" can add to our collective desensitization. On the contrary, the film is about the wretchedness of violence, not the excitement of it.

"I really wanted to tell the stories of these men," he said toward the end of our conversation. "I wanted before the end of the century to tell their experience, as opposed to adding one more movie to a long train of World War II films that were filled with excitement and adventure and sacrifice and nobility. Do you sugarcoat it by telling people that dying is easy, and dying is noble? How many movies have said that to us ad nauseam? I'd rather create some nauseam. I would rather show how these boys really died. I really feel that I made this movie as a memorial."

In that, he has succeeded. "Saving Private Ryan" is indeed a memorial, but it is closer in spirit to Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial on the Mall in Washington than to the flag-planting Iwo Jima statue across the Potomac. It honors the dead and the survivors of Normandy, not by showing them in attitudes of heroic glory but by acknowledging the terror and sadness to which duty and happenstance delivered them. ♦

LETTER FROM LIBERIA

THE DEVIL THEY KNOW

*Is President Charles Taylor a bloodthirsty tyrant who is pillaging his country?
And, if so, why are so many American liberals on his side?*

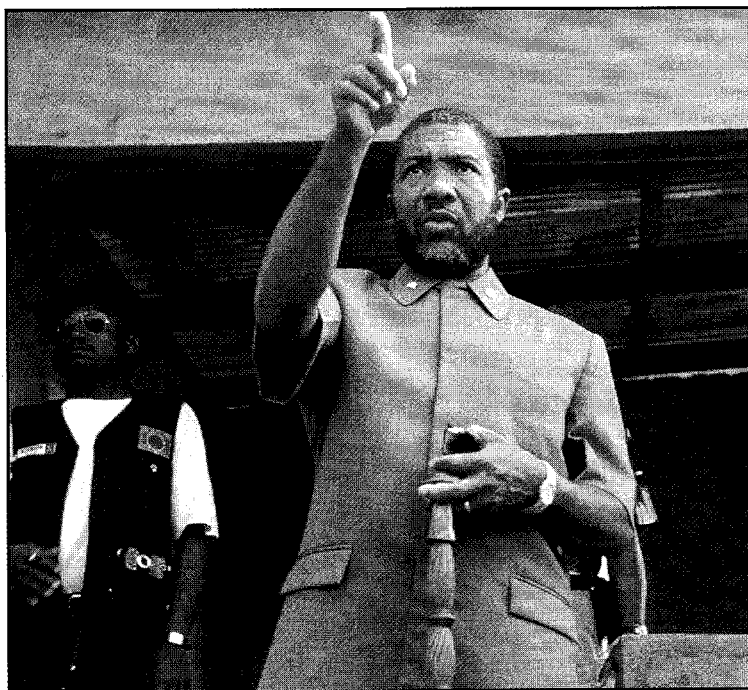
BY JON LEE ANDERSON

IN Balamah, a village surrounded by a patchwork of forest and small farms in central Liberia, I asked a boy if there had been much killing in the area during the recent civil war. "Too many people!" he exclaimed. "Much killing!" Who, I asked, had done the killing? I named some of the warring factions. The boy waved his hand and nodded, a gesture I understood to mean "All of them." I asked, "Why?" and he replied, shrugging, "They killed because they had power."

When I was a teenager, in the early seventies, I spent a year in Liberia living with a geologist uncle and his family, and I visited Balamah several times. I danced there for the first time in my life, with a circle of youngsters who chanted and banged sticks on cracker-tin lids. I even learned some words of the local Kpelle language, and was given a Kpelle name, Saki—which I was told meant "Tall Man"—that I was very proud of. I hiked into the jungle beyond Balamah looking for elephants, and met children who had never seen a white person. They shrieked in terror at the sight of me. I was also present once when a bush devil came through. He was on a mission to capture children for one of the mysterious bush schools that indigenous Liberians attend to acquire the knowledge and the ritual scars that will enable them to become full members of their tribe.

Graham Greene describes bush devils in "Journey Without Maps," his account of a trek through Liberia in 1935.

"The school and the devil who rules over it are at first a terror to the child," he writes. "It lies as grimly as a public school in England between childhood and manhood. He has seen the masked devil and has been told of his supernat-



Critics say that "corruption, misappropriation, ostentation, oversized security, and self-aggrandizement" have characterized Taylor's regime.

ural power; no human part of the devil is allowed to show... because it might be contaminated by the presence of the uninitiated, but it seems likely also because the unveiled power might do harm; for the same reason no one outside the school may see the devil unmasked for fear of blindness or death."

The bush devil who came to Balamah when I was a boy arrived after dark with an assistant. They heralded their entry into the village with musical instruments, and the entire community scattered in terror, racing to their huts. I was told to lie face down and not look up until the devil had passed. If I disobeyed, my host told me, a curse would be placed on him.

In those days, Balamah was reached along a narrow footpath through dense jungle, and its roofs were thatch. Now a little red clay road links it with the outside world, and most of the roofs are tin, but not much else has changed. The walls of the houses are still made of mud, and there is still no electricity. I asked after the Paramount Chief, and was informed that he was still alive, but was away. Then a barefoot old woman wearing a head wrap pushed through the knot of villagers, extended her hand in greeting, and called me by my Kpelle name. A young man explained in English that she was the chief's wife, and what she wanted to say was that she remembered me. When I asked if the bush devil was still there, too, the villagers exchanged uneasy glances but nodded positively and waved their hands vaguely in the direction of the forest. One of the young men told me that was why Balamah was so quiet that day. The villagers were staying close to home because the devil was thought to be out, and might pass by at any moment.

GRAHAM GREENE was in Liberia in 1935 speculating about bush devils because he wanted to take time off from writing fiction and to have an adventure in a place where the blank spaces on maps were still stamped, tantalizingly, with the words "Cannibals" and "Dense Forest." But it seems that he also had another agenda. British government reports told of horrific massacres committed against civilians by the Liberian President, Edwin Barclay, and Greene apparently had been asked by the Anti-Slavery Society to find out what was going on. He unexpectedly ran into the President soon after he crossed the border between Sierra Leone and Liberia, and the two men sat down to chat. President Barclay was accompanied by a contingent of soldiers and hammock bearers and a gramophone on which he played

MIKE GOLDWATER/NETWORK-SABA

Josephine Baker records. As the two men talked, Greene recalled, "Africa, lovely, vivid and composed, slipped away, and one was left with the West Indies, an affable manner, and rhetoric, lots of rhetoric. But there was a lot of energy, too: [Barclay] was a politician in the Tammany Hall manner." Liberia's constitution is modelled on that of the United States, and Greene asked him if he had powers similar to those of an American President. Barclay replied with enthusiasm that his authority was greater. "Once elected," he said, "and in charge of the machine... why then, I'm boss of the whole show."

The current President of Liberia, Charles Taylor, is also very much the boss of the whole show, and has similarly ambiguous qualities. Like Edwin Barclay, he has been accused of horrible acts of cruelty and depravity, yet—also like Barclay—he has great charm. Taylor, who was elected President a year ago, after fighting for seven years in a terrible civil war that virtually destroyed the country, is an urbane man with an economics degree from Bentley College, in Waltham, Massachusetts. He enjoys Handel and Bach—"not Beethoven"—and his favorite singer is Mahalia Jackson. His favorite movie character is Dirty Harry. He is athletic, and keeps in shape by regularly swimming and playing tennis and that very American game basketball.

The President is known formally as Dahkpannah Charles Ghankay Taylor. Dahkpannah means "Supreme Zo," the title given to the ultimate chief of all sixteen of Liberia's indigenous tribes. Ghankay, Taylor's name from his mother's tribe, the Gola, means "Strong in the face of adversity." The English, Christian part of his name, Charles Taylor, is quintessentially Liberian; the country also abounds with Buchanans, Coopers, Johnsons, and Sawyers, and some years ago there was even a general named George Washington. Members of the ruling class in Liberia have traditionally been descendants of the African-Americans who began settling on the wild shores of West Africa's Grain Coast in the eighteen-twenties. They were sponsored by the American Colonization Society, which was implementing a "back to Africa" policy for freed slaves. Gradually, after years

of hardship from disease and warfare with the indigenous population, the Americo-Liberians, as they were called, secured a coastal foothold and voted for self-rule. They formed the True Whig Party and chose "The Love of Liberty Brought Us Here" as their national motto. In 1847, Liberia (for "liberty") became Africa's first republic. Its capital, Monrovia, was named for James Monroe.

Despite the fact that during the civil war Charles Taylor commanded one of the most vicious armies of modern times, and is widely believed to have abused his power for personal enrichment on a grand scale, he has an impressive roster of liberal American friends and acquaintances that includes the Reverend Jesse Jackson and former United States Attorney General Ramsey Clark. Taylor enjoys an especially close relationship with former President Jimmy Carter, a fellow-Baptist, who travels frequently to Liberia to oversee "democracy building" and human-rights programs that the Carter Center foundation operates there. Taylor's lawyer and P.R. man in Washington, D.C., is Lester Hyman, a Kennedy protégé and the former chairman of the Democratic Party of Massachusetts. Hyman says that when President Clinton was in Africa this spring he telephoned Taylor from Air Force One and gave him a "pep talk that was very encouraging."

PRESUMABLY, the Presidential pep talk had to do with Taylor's efforts to keep peace in Liberia. Between December, 1989, and November, 1996, an estimated two hundred thousand people were killed in the war, and as much as eighty per cent of the population was displaced. The violence spilled over into Sierra Leone, which succumbed to its own version of the Liberian nightmare, and Guinea and the Ivory Coast were inundated with hundreds of thousands of refugees. A regional peacekeeping force, the Economic Community of West African States Ceasefire Monitoring Group, or ECOMOG, sent in troops, as did the U.N., and the United States conducted three separate Embassy evacuations. For a time, it seemed that the conflict was unresolvable.

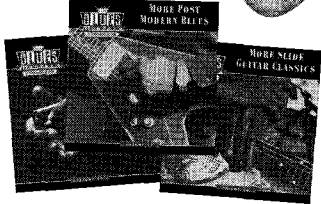
Liberia has always been a harsh place, but for most of this century it

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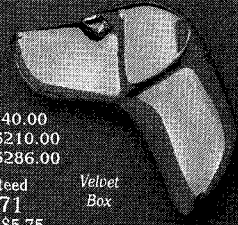
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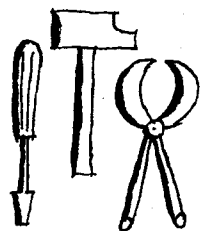
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was one of the most stable countries in Africa. It had not been colonized by Europeans, and thus avoided the violent independence struggles that began to disrupt the continent in the nineteen-fifties. It wasn't until 1980, when the government was overthrown in a military coup led by Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe, that Liberia was inflicted with the kind of openly despotic misrule that is a feature of life in much of Africa. During the multi-sided civil war that started nine years later, sadistic teenage killers sporting names like General Fuck Me Quick, Babykiller, and Dead Body Bones arbitrarily executed civilians and decorated checkpoints on the roads with human heads and entrails. Often on drugs, wearing fetishes they believed made them impervious to bullets, and garbed in costumes ranging from novelty-store fright masks to wigs and women's bathrobes, these murderous adolescents raped, pilaged, and slaughtered at will. Many engaged in cannibalism, eating the hearts and genitals of their slain enemies in order to enhance their "power."

Charles Taylor's fighters perpetrated some of the worst atrocities of the war, and it is a commonplace that Taylor was elected President last year not because he was popular but because people thought that if he didn't win he would continue the violence. Nevertheless, he is now a spokesman for peace, and to celebrate the first anniversary of his Presidency he is hosting a three-week "national conference on Liberia's future," beginning this week. He invited his domestic political opponents, several African heads of state, hundreds of prominent Liberians living abroad, and, of course, Americans like Ramsey Clark and Jesse Jackson. In preparation for the big event, Liberia's public marketplaces were flooded with T-shirts for sale bearing the picture of a peace dove and the words "Sweet Liberia."

Lester Hyman says that Taylor reminds him of Lyndon Johnson, and he believes that Taylor will become a great African leader. Ramsey Clark admires Taylor personally and points out that he went to war against the repressive Doe regime, which had received close to half a billion dollars in aid and military assistance from the Reagan Admin-

istration. African-American congressmen, like Donald Payne, of New Jersey, see Taylor as a link between two countries with unique historical ties. "I always felt Liberia was like a symbolic motherland to African-Americans," Payne says. He likes Taylor "because he's intelligent; he knows what sells here, and he's from over *there*. He has the knowledge of both worlds." Lester Hyman says he knew from the first time he met Taylor, in 1991, that he was "a man we could work with."



THE terminal at Robertsfield airport, thirty-five miles outside Monrovia, is a torched husk, and the road into town snakes through a depopulated, marshy green landscape in which the dominant features are a long line of electrical pylons with no wires, and roofless, burned-out houses. Bumper slogans on buses say, "Rejoice, God's Word Is the Best" and "Every Disappointment Is a Blessing." In the city, which spreads untidily over a promontory on West Africa's Atlantic coast, a plethora of evangelical signs are a reminder of the important role that American Protestant missionaries have always played in Liberia. There is the Eternal Love Winning Africa missionary radio station, the Fullness of Time Evangelistic Ministry, the Living Water Baptist Church, and God's End Time Ministries, Inc.

Policemen and ECOMOG troops still man roadblocks all over town. Refugees live in shanties built on the remains of destroyed homes; there is no electricity except for those few people who own private generators; and running water is scarce. The town's hardscrabble businesses, like the Survival of the Fittest Tailor Shop and a food kiosk called Neutral Ground, have assimilated Liberia's recent history. The placard for an artisans' workshop reads, "Creations Showroom: Center of Rehabilitation for the Tortured, War-Wounded, and Disabled."

Charles Taylor lives in a neighborhood called Congotown, which borders the ocean on the outskirts of the city. He has built himself a huge new house there, and several of his aides have homes nearby. Taylor's compound, which is surrounded by high concrete walls, has a private chapel, tennis and

basketball courts, and a swimming pool. It is built into the incline of a steep hill and overlooks a verdant bushland that becomes a swamp in the rainy season.

President Taylor rarely makes public appearances, but most days, around midmorning, he leaves his residence under heavy guard and is driven downtown to the Executive Mansion in a high-speed convoy of two dozen new Mercedes-Benzes and Land Rovers and trucks full of bodyguards. The accompanying arsenal includes assault rifles, RPG-7 rocket launchers, and heavy machine guns. For everyone but the President, access to the mansion is through a nearby slum, where several roadblocks are manned by members of the President's own Special Security Service, former guerilla fighters. Armed with AK-47 assault rifles and frequently drunk, they often hassle visitors for "dash," or bribe money. Other security boys hang around the entrance to the mansion, many of them wearing three-quarter-length brown trenchcoats and sunglasses that make them look for all the world like Haitian Tontons Macoutes from the Duvalier years. The ones inside invariably demand identification, and then ask, "Boss, what you got for me?"

The mansion is a curving, eight-story building constructed by Israeli contractors in the nineteen-sixties. It has an especially sinister history. Samuel Doe started his coup there in 1980 by ritually murdering President William Tolbert. Ten years later, Doe met his own grisly end when he ventured out of the mansion to meet with Prince Johnson, one of Charles Taylor's lieutenants, who had broken away from Taylor to lead his own faction. Johnson tortured Doe to death, and recorded it on videotape.

Just outside the walled grounds of the mansion there used to be a statue commemorating Liberia's Unknown Soldier. It was destroyed last May during a purification rite ordered by President Taylor to rid the mansion of evil spirits. There were "persistent reports," Bishop Alfred Reeves, one of the President's senior religious advisers, says, that a child had been buried alive under the monument as a sacrifice. "We had said this mansion needed to be cleansed ever since the assassination of President Tolbert," Reeves says. "We said it needed to be conse-

crated, but no one really listened to the church until Mr. Taylor came to power."

Taylor is a self-described "deeply religious" man, and an ardent numerologist; seven is his lucky number. Accordingly, seventy church elders from a variety of Christian denominations separated into groups of seven and spent a week going through the mansion from floor to floor, room to room, praying and fasting. The consecration may not have worked, however. There is a black cat prowling around, which has Reeves worried, because, as he explains, this is no ordinary cat: "This is a witch transformed into a cat." The cat is said to have leaped either from a small hole in a painting or from a statue of the Virgin Mary. It landed on a praying clergyman and tried to pluck out his eyes. In early June, the black cat reappeared, reportedly attacking a Presidential guard before escaping again. "This is dangerous," Reeves says. "Very dangerous."

TAYLOR'S consecration ceremony fed a rampant rumor mill in Monrovia. The gossip includes a story about the President having an employee killed for some transgression, and then filling a bucket with his blood, which was kept under the Presidential bed until Taylor wanted to bathe in it. The diplomatic community is divided about how much of this sort of thing to believe, but most Western observers agree that Taylor is, as one of them put it, "incredibly superstitious and obsessed with his personal security."

Juju, as witchcraft and sorcery are called in Liberia, has long been associated with Liberia's political culture, and its most malevolent practices—ritual human sacrifice and cannibalism—are usually linked to people seeking power or to those who fear losing it. Samuel Kofi Woods, the director of the Justice and Peace Commission, a human-rights organization run by the Catholic Church, blames Taylor for what he says is an upsurge of politically motivated ritual murders. Woods says that the consecration ceremony sent the message that Taylor believes in juju. Indeed, in early June there were several local news stories about "heart men" at large. Human hearts were reportedly being removed and eaten by candidates for various offices to enhance their chances of winning election.

One afternoon, Charles Taylor formally received me in the carport of his residence, and I asked him about the juju aspects of his consecration. Taylor is a short, trim man, with copper-colored skin, a moon face, and a closely cropped beard and hair that are fading to gray. He sat in a small chair covered in beige velour and shiny brass, next to a black Mercedes sedan. He wore an ivory-colored lace caftan shirt and pantaloons, python-skin slippers with gold buckles, a diamond-encrusted gold watch, gold-rimmed sunglasses, and a black baseball cap with "President Taylor" spelled out in gold braid. There was a small side table next to him, and next to it a white plastic lawn chair. He smiled and motioned to the chair: "Sit down, my dear, sit down." A carved oxblood-colored swagger stick lay on the table, a kind of sceptre that he carries around with him. I asked him about it, and he told me it was made from the wood of a "sacred tree," under which no grass grows, and which causes any animal that comes near it to die. He explained that he began carrying the stick during the war.

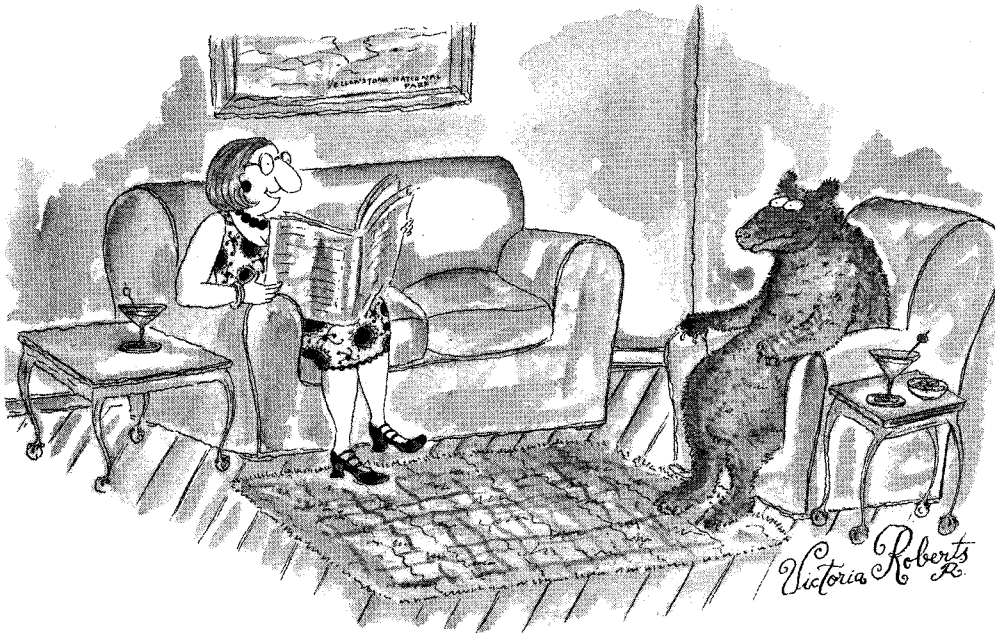
It was a Saturday, a Presidential day off, and Taylor let me know right away that in order to see me he had forfeited an opportunity to watch the World Cup match between Nigeria and Spain. Nevertheless, he seemed to be in an expansive mood. He was eager to talk

about money, about Liberia's limitless potential for becoming a wealthy country. This seems on the face of things to be an unrealistic position, since Liberia's foreign debt stands at more than two billion dollars and the national budget for 1998 is only forty-one million dollars. The war took a terrible toll on the country's infrastructure. Iron mines and rubber plantations were pillaged. Small farmers are unable to plant because they lack seed and basic tools. None of this seems to daunt Charles Taylor, however.

"There is gold everywhere in this country. Diamonds! You just have to dig and you find gold," Taylor said enthusiastically. The President waved toward a husky man who was standing uncomfortably out in the sun on the driveway about ten feet in front of us. Taylor introduced him as Jenkins Dunbar, the Minister for Lands, Mines, and Energy. "This is the man who is going to find us oil, which will be our salvation," Taylor said. "Aren't you, Dunbar? When are you going to find that oil? It better be pretty soon!" Dunbar froze, laughed nervously, and quipped, "Soon, very soon, Mr. President. If it's there, you can be sure we'll find it!" About twenty minutes later, Taylor noticed that Dunbar was still standing in the sun, fidgeting, and he told him to "find someone" to get him a chair. It was an extremely hot day.

I asked Taylor whether the consecration could accurately be described as an





"Parks and Wildlife called—I thought you should know."

exorcism. He guffawed loudly. "Oh, my dear, I wouldn't say it was an exorcism! No... Over the years, the war years of Liberia, the bloodshed, we have often fasted and prayed. We are very, very, very religious people, we are praying people, just as in the United States. I mean, that's your strength: In God we trust! What happened here is that there were all kinds of stories about what went on in high places in Liberia. You know, in some parts of Africa there are still people who believe in human sacrifice. These things are all vanity. And so this Executive Mansion—after the war, and we finally get to be President, we thought it essential to consecrate this. And the kind of purification was to be coming in and praying and thanking God for having brought a President to this building."

I asked Taylor whether he felt any moral responsibility for the atrocities committed by his troops during the war. "I have already apologized to the Liberian people, I have asked their forgiveness, and I have also forgiven them," he replied. When I pushed for a fuller accounting, he said, "Wars are terrible wherever they are, and things happen you cannot account for. Sometimes things may happen in one place when you are in another place. What is important is that once it happens you make sure that justice is done." There

had been "excesses" committed by his troops, Taylor conceded, but whenever a serious crime like rape or murder had come to his attention he had executed those responsible. At any rate, he insisted, the estimates of Liberia's war dead were "far too high—I don't think we lost even twenty thousand people in the war."

I picked up my camera to take Taylor's picture, but as I did an adviser tapped me on the back and said, in a low voice, "Please don't. If you take a photograph of him like this, you'll make him look like a typical African dictator."

"TAYLOR is like an onion," a United States State Department official said to me. "You peel and peel, and you think you've gotten to the core, and you have to keep going."

Taylor was born in the little town of Arthington, outside Monrovia, in 1948. He was the third of fifteen children born to a former servant girl and a rural Baptist schoolteacher who also worked as a sharecropper and a judge. Taylor says that he was in his early teens when he perceived the need for political change in Liberia, which was then led by William Vacanarat Shadrach Tubman, a cigar-chomping politician who had been in office since 1944. Tubman was one of the Americo-Liberians who

had ruled Liberia since its birth as a nation. Their lighter skin tone was a badge of social distinction, and those who could trace their lineage back to the first settlers enjoyed a special status. Their culture was a quaint mimicry of the antebellum South: they were merchants and planters, Freemasons, spoke Pidgin English, attended Baptist churches, sang gospel music, used American dollars as legal tender, and saluted a red-white-and-blue flag.

To all intents and purposes, Liberia was the United States' bastard colony in Africa. Liberia declared war on Germany during the Second World War, and the Americans built the Robertsfeld airport. Liberia's economy was always dominated by or linked to American interests. The Firestone

Plantations Company has been the country's largest single employer for much of this century. Firestone ran two hospitals, twenty schools, and the Coca-Cola bottling plant. Bethlehem Steel was a partner in Liberia's biggest iron-ore mine. Liberia's ship registry, which sells "flags of convenience" to the world's maritime fleets and has long been a major source of the country's revenue, was and still is administered by Americans.

Charles Taylor was an outspoken student leader, and after Tubman died in office, in 1971, he became a vocal opponent of his inept successor, William Tolbert. In 1980, Tolbert invited Taylor to come home from school in Massachusetts for talks as the head of a student delegation. Taylor went, and was there several weeks later when Tolbert was killed by Samuel Doe. Doe was an ethnic Krahn. For the first time in Liberia's history, a descendant of the indigenous people ruled the land.

On the morning after Tolbert's murder, Taylor walked into Doe's military headquarters and, as he says, "immediately got to work." Nasty purges followed the coup, including a public execution, on a city beach, of several prominent members of Tolbert's cabinet, and though Taylor doesn't "claim I was Paul Revere trying to run and stop things," he "did a lot with a team

of others to try to curb some excesses." He soon secured a post as director of the General Services Agency, which oversees government purchasing. But in October of 1983 Taylor fled the country, and shortly after his disappearance Doe accused him of embezzling nearly a million dollars in state funds. The following year, Taylor was arrested by U.S. marshals in Somerville, Massachusetts, and he spent sixteen months in jail while his lawyer, Ramsey Clark, fought his extradition. Back in Liberia, Doe was becoming increasingly despotic, but he continued to receive a steady flow of military and economic aid from the United States. Liberia was an important American Cold War ally, the host of C.I.A. communications facilities and one of the Navy's Omega navigation stations, and Doe was an avowed anti-Communist, so the human-rights abuses of his regime were overlooked.

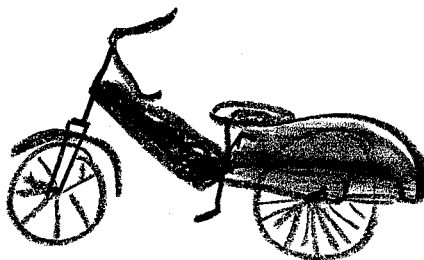
In 1985, Taylor escaped from jail and disappeared for several years. He is loath to discuss this period, saying coyly that he plans to save the details for his autobiography, but for a time he was in Libya, receiving military training as Muammar Qaddafi's guest. Then, on Christmas Eve, 1989, he reappeared on Liberia's eastern border, transformed into a guerrilla chieftain with a small army. By August, 1990, rebel troops were on the verge of seizing Monrovia from Doe when an ECOMOG force intervened. After Doe was murdered, in September, 1990, an interim government was formed. It was backed by ECOMOG troops from Ghana, Sierra Leone, Gambia, Guinea, and Nigeria, with Nigeria by far the dominant presence. ECOMOG and Taylor became the principal adversaries in the widening war, which rapidly came to include other factions as well.

As the warlord of the country's largest rebel faction, the National Patriotic Front, Taylor became the most powerful, and possibly the wealthiest, man in Liberia. He is believed to have made millions from diamonds, gold, and timber looted from the mining areas and rich timber forests that his forces controlled. Taylor established what became known as the Republic of Greater Liberia in the up-country town of Gbarnga, and it remained his base for most of the war. For a time, he also lived in the manager's residence at the

Firestone rubber plantation, an hour's drive from Monrovia, in an antebellum-style mansion with a veranda and tall white pillars, the plinths of which are now painted an incongruous red. A businessman in Monrovia told me that the red "keeps out evil, jujus, or some shit." Mass graves were later found at the plantation and in the suburbs of Monrovia that had been occupied by Taylor's men.

More than a dozen peace agreements and nearly twice as many cease-fires were negotiated before an effective demobilization and disarmament process was begun, late in 1996, and preparations for an election soon followed. Predictably, Taylor's campaign was the best financed. Taylor was also the most visible candidate—the only one to have a helicopter at his disposal and privately owned radio and television stations on permanent standby to broadcast his messages. Among the more memorable slogans of Taylor's campaign was "He killed my ma, he killed my pa, but I'm going to vote for him anyway," and "Better the devil you know than the angel you don't." Liberians got the message, and seventy-five per cent of the voters brought in the devil they knew.

THE one-year anniversary of Taylor's Presidency is not a cause for rejoicing for a large segment of the Liberian population. In Gbarnga, the capital of Taylor's wartime Republic of Greater Liberia, at an open-air roadside bar with blue plastic awnings stamped "UNHCR" (for United Nations High Commission on Refugees), I met Martin O'Reilly, an Irish lay brother, who was drinking beer with three young Liberian men who were his students at the Catholic mission. We walked back to the mission to talk, and while we were in the refectory, shouting erupted outside. An angry group of disabled former Taylor fighters, squatters who had taken up residence in the mission compound, had gone in wheelchairs



and on crutches to where my car was parked. They had seen me holding a camera when I drove in, and they suspected me of representing the government. Officials had come many times to photograph them and make promises, they said, only to go away again and never return. They were infuriated, and threatened to lie under the wheels of the car to prevent me from leaving. One, a legless young man in a wheelchair, acted as spokesman. He said that his nom de guerre had been Prince Johnson, after the man who had tortured President Doe to death. He had been a good fighter, he said, and his comrades had suffered in order to bring this government to power, but now they had been forgotten. There were more than a hundred ex-fighters just like them in Gbarnga, he said, and soon, if the government did not help them, they planned to go to Monrovia and mount a protest.

The road down to Monrovia from the central plateau on which Gbarnga sits winds through a lonely panorama of jungle and overgrown farms. Most of the land is untended, and many of the houses are roofless, gutted. There is little passing traffic apart from jeeps representing one international relief agency or another, and an occasional flatbed truck ferrying huge logs—reminders of persistent reports that since the war President Taylor has continued to profit from massive, uncontrolled logging of Liberia's virgin forests. One of Taylor's brothers now oversees the Forestry Development Authority, and the logging, according to credible reports, is supervised by a former Taylor rebel commander and a band of armed ex-rebel fighters who are using forced labor to fell the trees. The government has issued a report denying this.

The welter of police and military roadblocks, so much a feature of life in Monrovia, is replicated in the countryside. At one checkpoint just outside Gbarnga, the officer in charge was openly hostile. He didn't ask for a bribe, but he conducted a tense and insistent interrogation. This was the roadblock where Samuel Dokie—a former Taylor ally turned critic—his wife, and several other relatives were arrested last November and then vanished. After several days, amid a mounting public protest led by Kofi Woods, their gruesomely

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tortured and burned bodies were found dumped on the outskirts of Gbarnga.

The discovery of the Dokies' bodies provoked what has probably been the biggest scandal of Taylor's Presidency. In the police investigation that ensued, Benjamin Yeaten, the chief of the Special Security Service, apparently admitted having ordered Dokie's arrest, for motives that remain unclear, and several S.S.S. men were charged with the murders. All of them were released, however, and although Yeaten was temporarily removed from his duties, he remains in charge of the S.S.S. I met him in Charles Taylor's presence. A slender, unsmiling man with watchful, almond-shaped eyes, Yeaten was supervising security for the President during a condolence call on the Nigerian Ambassador following the death of General Sani Abacha, the extremely corrupt and cruel ruler of Nigeria. (A few weeks after Abacha's death, Olusegun Obasanjo, the former President of Nigeria, who had been a political prisoner for three years, remarked that Abacha was "more than evil, more than sadistic, he was actually mad.")

Although Taylor had been for all intents and purposes at war with Nigeria during the years that ECOMOG, which was dominated by Nigerian forces, supported the official Liberian government in Monrovia, General Abacha and Taylor had enjoyed a good rapport. It was Abacha who had persuaded Taylor to agree to a ceasefire and to participate in the 1997 elections. At a press conference after his visit to the Nigerian Ambassador, Taylor expressed his bereavement over the death of his "brother" and announced his intention of flying to Nigeria to console Abacha's widow.

As soon as the news of Abacha's death broke, Nigerian ECOMOG jets based at Robertsfield airport took off and buzzed the Executive Mansion and President Taylor's home in an intimidating fashion. I had heard the startling roar of the jets myself. Apparently, Taylor was not as popular with some of the other military leaders in Nigeria as he had been with Abacha, and he was clearly anxious to shore up good relations with Abacha's successor.

During the press conference, a young bodyguard held what looked like a camouflage flak jacket intended for the

NOSTALGIA

(RURAL DISTRICT SCHOOL #7, RANSOMVILLE, NEW YORK)

Crumbling stone steps of the old schoolhouse
Boarded-up windows shards of winking glass
Built 1898, numerals faint in stone as shadow
Through a window, obedient rows of desks mute

How many generations of this rocky countryside grown & gone
How many memories & all forgotten
& soon to be razed & goodbye America
The flagless pole, what relief!
I love it, the eye lifting skyward to nothing
Never to pledge allegiance to the United States of America again
Never to press my flat right hand over my heart again as if I had one

—JOYCE CAROL OATES

President's use if necessary. S.S.S. men bulging with weapons stood around the room. The security men were well behaved in Taylor's presence, but their frequent drunkenness, cajoling for bribe money, and hostile behavior during the daily Presidential convoys have led to speculation that Taylor's downfall might one day come not from old enemies or hostile Nigerians but from his own people. Only a few weeks earlier, a group of disabled former rebels had invaded the headquarters of the National Patriotic Party in Monrovia and taken several officials hostage. In another incident that was much talked about among Westerners in Monrovia, foreign diplomats who had been invited to a fiftieth-birthday party for Taylor in the Executive Mansion were roughed up by S.S.S. men who barged in and began eating all the food.

ONE of the few Liberians willing to speak openly about accusations of corruption against Taylor is Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, a former World Bank economist who ran against him in the Presidential election last year. She came in a distant second, with less than ten per cent of the vote. Johnson-Sirleaf admitted to me that she had supported Taylor when he first planned to oust Doe, but she says that she backed away from him after he began killing people he saw as potential rivals. "It was clear that Taylor's aim was to put himself in power," she says, "not to challenge the status quo." Johnson-Sirleaf says that

she considers the principal features of Charles Taylor's leadership to be "corruption, misappropriation, ostentation, oversized security, and self-aggrandizement." She believes that Taylor "wants to rape the state and then give it out, to create a patronage state."

Most Western diplomats, relief workers, and businessmen in Liberia say that the pattern of "pillage and plunder" instituted by Taylor during the war years has continued during his tenure in office. "He's very corrupt," said one diplomat, who charges Taylor with operating a "dual fiscal system": the official one and a private system based on profits from the illegal extraction of timber, gold, and diamonds. Taylor is also believed to be receiving a cut of the profits from the exclusive monopolies he allows on the importation of rice and other necessities. The diplomat calculates Taylor's private revenues to be "possibly equal" to the official budget.

The day I spoke to Taylor in his carport, he talked feelingly of his concern for his fellow-Liberians, about their "need for a leader who understands" them. He had to be like "a father, uncle, godfather, teacher, and priest" to his countrymen. I asked him whether it was more important for him to be loved or to be respected by his people. "I want to be respected," he said. "If I just think about love, love, love, I'll get nothing done. People must pay taxes. I must prosecute people who violate the law. . . . I'd like to be loved by my people, but I'm going for the

long term; I want to go for the long-term benefit of this republic rather than short-term love." Then he rose from his chair and walked away. He wanted to catch the remaining minutes of the Nigeria-Spain game. He was, he told me, rooting for Nigeria.

On my last night in Liberia, I was visited in the restaurant of my hotel by Samuel Kofi Woods and a social worker who provides therapy to Liberia's ex-combatants. The social worker told me about a young man who confessed that it had been his "job" to slit open the bellies of pregnant women at a roadside checkpoint. He and his comrades would take bets on what sex the fetus was. In recurrent hallucinations, the man sees the faces of his victims walking toward him, and he shouts out at them, "It wasn't only me!" This particular case, the social worker acknowledged, is hopeless, as is that of another man—a victim—he is treating. The man's entire family of eight were slaughtered in front of him; one of his children was picked up in the air and literally hacked in two before his eyes. The man had been left alive "so that his suffering would be greater." And it was; the man was drinking and drugging himself to death. The social worker himself had to undergo counselling, he confessed, after he witnessed killers tear the heart out of a living man, then boil and eat it. It happened in broad daylight in Monrovia, just two years ago, at a gas station near the Eternal Love Winning Africa road junction.

The social worker expressed his fears about the mental health of the many ex-fighters who have received no psychological counselling, but he said he was especially concerned about those who have been rewarded with jobs, weapons, uniforms, and power, like the youths serving in President Taylor's Special Security Service. He sees them as time bombs, psychopaths who, he predicts, will one day resort to violence to get "a piece of the action" that Taylor is now enjoying. "I almost feel sorry for the man," he said.

We talked for several hours. Kofi Woods left, and night fell. The social worker got up to go and we said our goodbyes, and then I sat back down at

my table. Within seconds, two of Taylor's S.S.S. boys were staring down at me. They had been waiting, they told me, "for hours." I was a hard man to find. I recognized them as a particularly persistent pair from the Executive Mansion. I had been accosted by them in downtown Monrovia earlier, and they had telephoned my room the day before. Tonight, they wanted their dash. One smiled, the other glared. The glaring one's eyes were so bloodshot I could see little white in his eyes.

I masked my fear with anger. I raised my voice. How dare they follow me, come into my hotel? Why should I pay them anything? The red-eyed man just kept glaring, but the smiling one began muttering excuses. They hadn't been following me, exactly. They worked for "Executive Mansion intelligence," and were keeping an eye on Kofi Woods. This was more chilling than any harassment of me. In a parody of politeness, I said goodbye and thanked them for their visit. We shook hands.

The next day, Robertsfield airport was crawling with S.S.S. men. President Taylor had flown out early to Nigeria, and was expected back at day's end. Groups of officials came and went. Several lethal-looking Nigerian jets equipped with rockets flew off with great roars, heading toward Sierra Leone's civil war. As I got in line in front of the baggage counter in the crowded little makeshift terminal building, an official in a dark suit came in. He was surrounded by security men, who opened up a space for him. As he pushed past me, I recognized him: it was President Taylor's cousin Joe Tate, the controversial national police chief, who

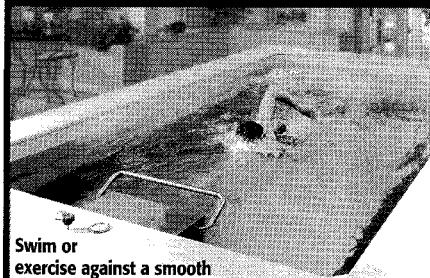
has been accused of having led gangs of looters and a political death squad during the war. I had interviewed him at police headquarters a few days before and now I greeted him. He recognized me and extended his hand. "So you're leaving?" he murmured. I said yes and he replied, "Good," and moved on.

"Good?" I called after him. "What do you mean?"

Tate's entourage halted, and he turned toward me. "I mean it's good that you're leaving in one piece." Then he turned and walked away. ♦



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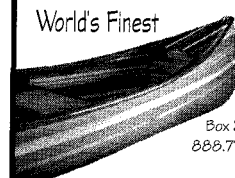
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PERSONAL HISTORY

ELEGY FOR IRIS

Scenes from an indomitable marriage.

BY JOHN BAYLEY

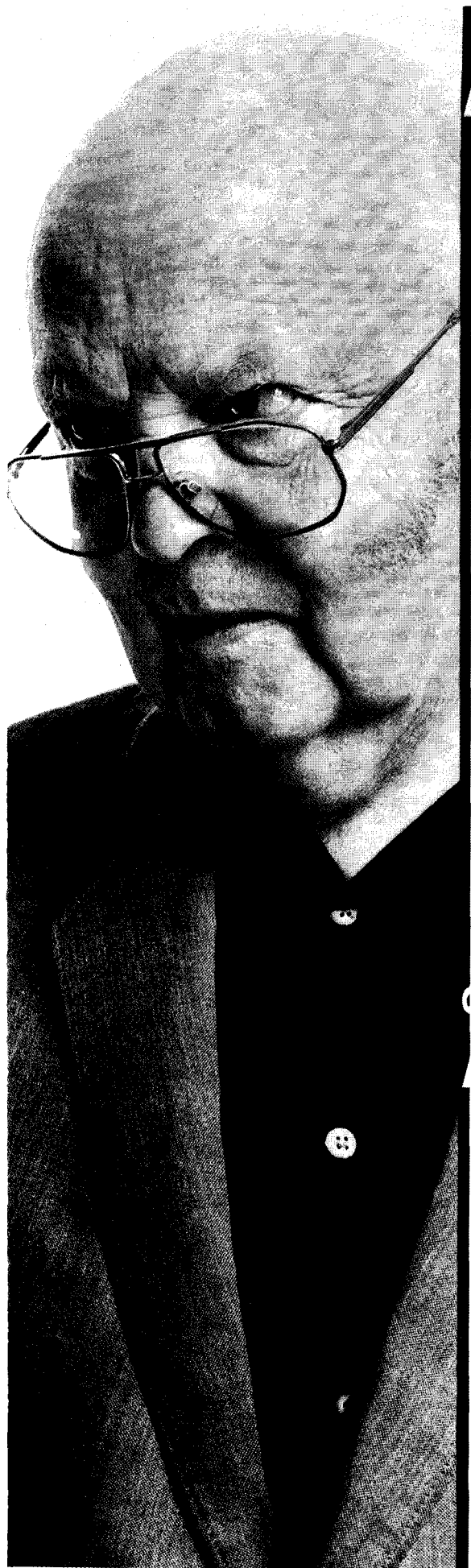
FOR years now, we've usually managed a treat for ourselves on really hot days, at home in the summer. We take the car for a mile or two along the bypass road from Oxford, and twist abruptly off onto the verge—quite a tricky feat with fast-moving traffic just behind. Sometimes there are hoots and shouts from cars that have had to brake at speed, but by then we have jolted to a stop on the tussocky grass, locked the car, and crept through a gap in the hedge.

I remember the first time we did it, more than forty years ago. We were on bicycles, and there was little traffic on the unimproved road. Nor did we know where the river was, exactly: we just thought it must be somewhere there. And with the ardor of comparative youth we wormed our way through the rank grass and sedge until we almost fell into it, or, at least, a branch of it. Crouching in the shelter of the reeds, we tore off our clothes and slipped in like water rats. A kingfisher flashed past our noses as we lay soundlessly in the dark sluggish current. A moment after we had crawled out, and were drying ourselves on Iris's waist slip, a big pleasure boat chugged past within a few feet of the bank. The steersman, wearing a white cap, gazed intently ahead. Tobacco smoke mingled with the watery smell at the roots of the tall reeds.

I still have the waist slip. I rediscovered it the other day, bunched up at the back of a drawer and stiff with powdery traces of dry mud. It is faded to a yellowish color; a wrinkled ribbon, once blue, decorates the hem. Could someone, later my wife, once have worn such a garment? It looks like something preserved from the wardrobe of Marie An-

PHOTOGRAPH
BY RICHARD AVEDON

Iris Murdoch and John Bayley, June 20, 1998.





"I'm sorry, Mr. Abbot is away from his desk."

toinette. I never gave it back to Iris after that occasion, and I think she forgot all about it.

IT was typical of my relations with Iris, after we first met, that I had very little idea of the other people in her life, or what they might mean to her. That was probably due to the ecstatic egoism of falling in love for the first time. It was 1953; I was twenty-eight; Iris was thirty-four. Iris existed for me as a wonderful and solitary being, first seen bicycling slowly and rather laboriously past a window in St. Antony's College, Oxford, where I was living. Trying to work, and gazing idly out at the passing scene on the Woodstock Road, I noted the lady on the bicycle—she was wearing a mackintosh, and seemed to me at once more a lady than a girl—and wondered who she was and whether I would ever meet her.

She was looking both absent and displeased. Maybe because of the weather, which was damp and drizzly. Maybe because her bicycle was old and creaky and hard to propel. Maybe because she hadn't yet met me? Her head was down, as if she were driving on

thoughtfully toward some goal, whether emotional or intellectual. I remember a friend saying playfully, perhaps a little maliciously, after she first met Iris, "She is like a little bull."

There was something almost supernatural about the way I actually met her. The day after I saw her on the bicycle, I encountered Elaine Griffiths, a tutor of early English literature, in the street. Miss Griffiths had had a soft spot for me ever since my oral exam, when she congratulated me on my essay on Chaucer's "Knight's Tale" but caught me out on a minor question of Anglo-Saxon syntax. Now she suddenly asked me if I would care to come to her college room for a drink that evening. I was happy to accept. It could only be a good thing to be on social terms with a senior member of the English faculty, to which I aspired in time to belong.

All such prudential considerations vanished when I presented myself, at six o'clock that evening. Miss Griffiths was just finishing a tutorial, and as I knocked on the door a young woman in a scholar's gown came out. I barely glanced at her, for through the open doorway I had caught sight of the person of the bicy-

cle—the girl? the lady?—standing and talking to some unseen character, with a well-filled glass in her hand.

She looked different from the bicycle lady, naturally enough. This was a social scene, and she was not wearing a mackintosh. Her short, fairish hair, unkempt and roughly fringed on the forehead, looked both healthy and greasy, as it still does. Later on, I was to cut and shampoo it for her now and then; at that distant time she hardly bothered. Slovenliness in those days was next to seriousness, at least in university circles. Iris had on a worn and grubby tweed skirt, rather overlong and ungainly. I noticed that her legs were short and robust and were clad in brown cotton stockings. Nylons were still uncommon in the early fifties.

This woman certainly had a serious look, and it dawned on me that my bicycle lady must be an academic of some sort. That gave me an immediate feeling of

despondency. It placed her; and I disliked the idea that she should be placed, even by me. At the same time, I was heartened by her general appearance and its total absence of anything that for me in those days constituted sex appeal. There was nothing so conventional as that about this woman. She was not "a girl," and she had no girlish attractions. This seemed highly satisfactory, for what was a rather ignoble reason. Since she had no obvious female charms, she was not likely to appeal to other men.

"Meet Miss Murdoch," Miss Griffiths said. "Iris, this is one of the more promising young ones in the English school. Very good results in Finals. I caught him out over Old English grammar, his weaker side, I fear, but he did a beautiful piece on the 'Knight's Tale.'"

That bloody "Knight's Tale." Was I never going to hear the end of it? Iris Murdoch gave me a kindly look, said "Hullo," and continued talking to another guest at the party. Miss Griffiths handed me a glass, from which I at once took a desperate swig. I coughed, and felt myself going scarlet in the face. It was a strong gin and French vermouth,

the English equivalent of an American Martini—no ice in those days, of course.

I never managed to talk to Iris that evening, although after two or three other men arrived I hovered vainly near her. The god of chance seemed, however, to be in a long-suffering mood, and he patiently set to work once more. Asked to supper by friends three weeks later, I discovered that Iris was my sole fellow-guest. But I soon felt that I was failing again. Although she was friendly and not at all shy, Iris was not a helpful conversationalist. I offered openings and raised points in what I hoped was an interesting way, but she smiled kindly and did not respond. She was teaching and writing philosophy, and like many philosophers in Oxford she had the habit of considering what was said in a judicious silence. She turned my poor little point over, as if asking, "What exactly does this mean?" and if she decided that, indeed, it meant very little she was too polite to say.

Quite abruptly, Iris said that she must go home. Our hosts looked disappointed. For the first time, I managed to seize the moment, and I said, regretfully, that I must go, too. Our hosts looked more philosophical about that: it was Iris they had wanted, almost greedily, to stay; and I was surprised by this, because as a guest she had seemed to take very little trouble, if any, even though she had disseminated around her what seemed an involuntary aura of beneficence and good will.

Good nights having been said and the front door closed, we unlocked our bicycles and set out together into the damp, mild Oxfordshire night. My lights were in order; her front one dimmed and wavered on the verge of extinction, and I respectfully urged her to bicycle on the inside, and to keep as close as possible to my own illumination. Then we rode in silence, and I assumed it was to break it that she asked me in a friendly way if I had ever thought of writing a novel. It was a wholly unexpected question, but for once my answer was ready. Yes, indeed, I was writing one, or trying to write one, at that moment.

But why should Miss Murdoch ask me about novels? It must be to indulge me and get me to talk about myself, for clearly she, a philosopher, could have no

interest in the matter. She probably never read novels, being far too busy with higher things. I made some deprecating comment to this effect, and the next moment Miss Murdoch said that she herself had written a novel, which was shortly to be published.

I felt overwhelmed with awe and admiration. So this extraordinary creature had thrown off a novel, as if negligently, in the intervals of a busy life of teaching. "You mustn't tell anyone," she said, stopping her bicycle and putting a foot to the ground. She looked straight at me, speaking lightly but also very seriously. "I don't want anyone to know."

I gave a fervent undertaking: I would not reveal her secret to a soul. As we stood there in the dark road, half on and half off our bicycles, I felt that this wonderfully intuitive and perspicuous being had seen right down inside me, liked what she saw, and judged it worthy of her fullest trust. And could she have known that I had fallen in love with her, and decided, like a philosopher, on a ground of reason and good sense, that she was also in love with me?

As I came to know her, it occurred to me to wonder if she had not revealed this secret of her novel to quite a number of people. Most of her many friends in London must have known about it. What is more, some of them must even have read it—and in Iris's own handwriting. One couple—old friends of hers—took good care to let me know, when they saw that I was becoming friendly with Iris, that they had read the manuscript. For, of course, there is something highly displeasing about one of our friends getting to know our other friends without telling us, as La Rochefoucauld might have said.

Like all lovers, I suppose, I wished to be a special case in quite the wrong sense—to be "the one." I felt that by telling me that she didn't want anyone to know of the novel's existence Iris was singling me out. But her instinct, in this regard, was, essentially, a kindly one. She wanted each of her friends to know her in the same pristine way. No groups, no sets. No comparing of notes between two about a third. This desire that each of her relationships should be special and separate, as innocent as in

the Garden of Eden, was of great significance with Iris. Since what she felt about each of her friendships was totally genuine and without guile, there was no graduation among them, no comparisons made. Each one was whole in itself.

After we remounted and rode slowly on, I inquired diffidently about the content of her novel. What was it about? How had she come to write it? She made no direct reply, but, much more exciting, she said how important it was for any narration to "have something for everybody." I was surprised but also impressed by the simplicity of the idea, and the force with which she expressed it, slowly and reflectively.

"A bit like Shakespeare," I suggested.

"Well, perhaps, yes," she said.

IN early summer of the following year, St. Antony's College gave a modest dance. Although I was not by training or by temperament a dancing man, I determined to ask Iris if she would come with me. Iris accepted with alacrity. This caused a range of complications in my heart. Other people, my colleagues at St. Antony's, for example, would ask her to dance, and suppose one of them were to fall in love with her, or she with him? There were other, more pressing practical considerations:

Where would I take her to dine before the dance? I had no money to spare, but I felt it must be somewhere reasonably good, and so I chose the Regency restaurant, which advertised itself in the *Oxford Mail* as serving "probably the best food in Oxfordshire." At half past six on the appointed

evening, I went to collect Iris in her college room. After I knocked, a voice from within requested me to hang on a minute. While waiting, I speculated about what she would look like and what she would be wearing. I hoped that it would be something dark, preferably black—suited to the person of mature years and sober disposition whom I still assumed her to be.

The door opened. An apparition in a sort of flame-colored brocade stood before me. I felt in some way scandalized—dazzled and appalled, at the same time. All my daydreams, my illusions and preconceptions about the woman—



the girl? the lady?—of the bicycle vanished into a past that I would very much have preferred to be inhabiting. I still thought her face attractively homely and not, in any conventional sense, pretty or attractive, even if it was a strong face in its own blunt-featured, snub-nosed way. But now I was seeing it as other people saw it. Although the face was in no way conventional itself, its trappings, so to speak, were. They seemed the sort of things that any girl would wear—a silly girl who had not the taste to choose her clothes carefully.

Iris seemed preoccupied. Perhaps about her face, which she now dabbed with powder, or her hair, or some hitch in her underwear. She wriggled and pulled at her dress uneasily, as if she were unfamiliar with whatever lay underneath it. Or perhaps she was preoccupied with the thought of what she might be doing somewhere else, with some other friends. She seemed preoccupied with anything and everything except me, of whom she appeared as unaware as she had been when she rode past my window. She didn't look at me, but she did take my hand, in an absent way, as we left for the dance.

The restaurant was a disaster. I can't remember what we ate, but it was very nasty, and the waiter was both gloomy and supercilious. Even the red wine was tasteless. But, as the dreadful dinner went on, our spirits, amazingly, rose. We began to giggle and to talk in whispers about the other, sepulchral-looking diners. At the end of it, Iris excused herself and went out to the ladies' room, leaving me to pay the bill. When she finally emerged, she was transformed again. Now she looked like a doll—a Watteau china doll with incongruously school-girl hair. She had slathered her mouth with lipstick, which she now proceeded, in an amateurish way, to kiss at with a scrap of paper taken from her bag.

St. Antony's, a former Anglican convent, was built around 1870. A steep flight of stone steps led down to the crypt below the nuns' chapel—now the library—in which the dance was to be held. As we descended, Iris trod on her long dress, slipped, and slid inelegantly down a few steps on her behind. People rushed to help, and I found myself entertaining the unworthy thought that she might have sprained her ankle;

not badly, but enough to incapacitate her for the evening.

But Iris was not hurt at all. She got up and smiled while the others brushed her down, amid laughter and joking. We moved onto the floor among a crowd. I made a few introductions. She seemed already to have made new friends. Her manner was no longer quiet and withdrawn. I made unconfident gestures indicative of asking her to dance, and we assumed the appropriate semi-embrace.

My dancing was indeed unconfident. I had sometimes enjoyed it at hops in the night clubs or on weekends in the Army, when already more than a little drunk. Now, as we moved, there seemed no correlation between the different parts of us. Iris smiled at me encouragingly, and a few seconds later relinquished me and began to execute arm twirlings and arabesques on her own. She looked ungainly and rather affected, but touchingly naïve at the same time. It seemed clear that she knew no more about dancing à deux than I did; but when we brushed accidentally against another couple a few seconds later, and the man turned with a smile and seized hold of her, she melted into him at once, and the pair swung off together in perfect unison. The girl whom the man had been with did not look pleased, but she, too, had no choice except to smile as we began to revolve in some sort of way. I felt that the dance was already going against me, and that success had already gone beyond recall.

The band gave a flourish and stopped. Iris came back to me at once, looking happy and relaxed. She asked about my room in the college, which she had not yet seen. I asked if she would like to go up there, thinking of the bottle of champagne I had bought that morning and put in the cupboard, along with two glasses. She said she would like to very much. I took her arm as we mounted the stone steps, in case she had another fall. My room was small and Spartan: a bed, the cupboard, a table, and a wooden chair. But there was a gas fire, which I now turned on. I got the bottle and the glasses out of the cupboard. As I put them down on the table, we fell into each other's arms.

We never returned to the dance but sat in my room until two in the morning. We talked without stopping. I had

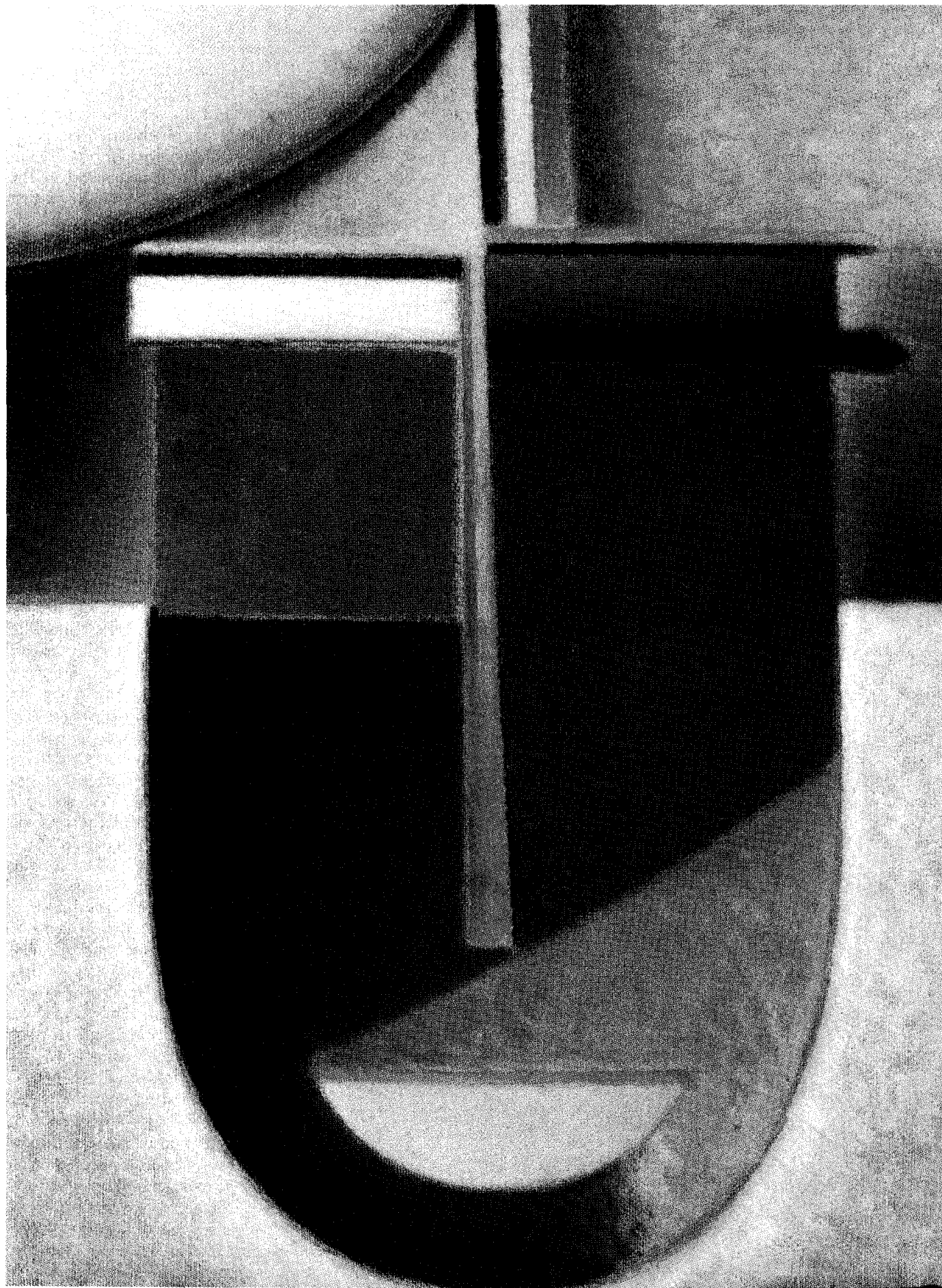
ARTIST'S EASEL

RUSSIAN BLUE

IN the annals of modern art, Galka Scheyer is one of the unsung partisans. A would-be artist who studied painting in her native Germany and in London and Paris, she had her conversion experience in 1915, when, encountering a painting by the Russian-born Alexei von Jawlensky, she decided to devote her life to his work. Their ensuing friendship, which was intense but platonic, lasted until Jawlensky's death in 1941, and it also inspired the formation of the Blue Four, a loosely organized artists' group consisting of Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Jawlensky, and Lyonel Feininger. (Kandinsky and Klee had been associated with the earlier Blue Rider group, in Munich.) Scheyer's valiant labors on behalf of her artists finally receive their due in a handsome book, out next month, called "The Blue Four: Feininger, Jawlensky, Kandinsky, and Klee in the New World" (Yale), which includes "Abstract Head: Sun-Color-Life," at right.

Hoping to find a public in the United States for her "Four Blue Kings," Scheyer came here in 1924. When New York proved indifferent—a show of fifty works at the Daniel Gallery elicited no sales—she moved to California. There she spent the next fifteen years arranging exhibitions, quarrelling with dealers who encroached on her turf, and teaching children's art classes. She was a catalyst in West Coast cultural circles: the collectors Walter and Louise Arensberg bought works from her (mostly Klees), and she sold the penniless young musician John Cage a Jawlensky for twenty-five dollars.

Jawlensky was the hardest sell, but Scheyer never wavered in her dedication to his bold, semi-abstract art, an amalgam of Fauve color and memories of Russian icons and peasant art. It was Jawlensky who gave her the nickname Galka (Russian for "jackdaw"), not long after they met. He dreamed that he was hurrying to reach a building at night, and "a *galka* rose up from the ground, flew towards me, settled on my chest, and nestled close to me trustingly, as if it could feel warmth or friendship there. I clasped the thing to my breast tenderly, and eagerly rushed on." —CALVIN TOMKINS



had no idea I could talk like that, and I am sure Iris never knew she could, either. I think that she was accustomed only to talking properly, as it were: considering, pausing, modifying, weighing her words. Now she babbled like a child. So did I. With arms around each other, kissing and rubbing noses—I said how much I loved her snub nose—we rambled on and on, seeming to invent on the spot, as we talked, a whole infantile language of our own. From time to time, she put her head back and laughed at me incredulously; I think we both felt incredulous. She seemed to be giving way to some deep need of which she had been wholly unconscious: the need to throw away not only the maneuvers and rivalries of intellect but the emotional fears and fascinations, the power struggles and surrenders of adult loving.

Long, long afterward, I had to look through her manuscripts and papers to find some stuff requested by her publisher. In the back of an exercise book containing notes for a novel, I found an entry, dated June 3, 1954, that read, "St. Antony's Dance. Fell down the steps, and seem to have fallen in love with J. We didn't dance much."

WE trail slowly over the long field toward the river. The heat seems worse than ever, although the sun, overcast, does not beat down as fiercely as it did earlier in the day. The hay was carried some time before, and

the brownish surface of the field is baked hard and covered with molehills. A pair of crows flaps lazily away as we approach the riverbank. Crows are said to live a long time, and I wonder idly if they are the same birds we saw here on our bathing visits, many years past.

The little nook where we usually entered the river is empty, as usual. Once, we would have shed our clothes as soon as possible and slid silently into the water, as we did on that first occasion. Now I have quite a struggle getting Iris's clothes off: I managed to put her bathing dress on at home, before we started. Her instinct nowadays seems to be to take her clothes off as little as possible. Even in this horribly hot weather, it is hard to persuade her to remove trousers and jersey before getting into bed.

She protests, gently though vigorously, as I lever off the outer layers. In her shabby old swimsuit, a two-piece, with a skirt and separate tunic top, she is an awkward and anxious figure, her socks trailing round her ankles. She is obstinate about not taking them off, and I give up the struggle. A pleasure barge chugs slowly past, an elegant girl in a bikini sunning herself on the deck, a young man in white shorts at the steering wheel. Both turn to look at us with an air of disbelief. I should not be surprised if they burst into guffaws of ill-mannered laughter, for we must present a comic spectacle—an elderly man struggling to remove the garments from

an old lady, with white skin and incongruously fair hair.

Iris suffers—as her mother did before her—from Alzheimer's. Its victims are not always gentle: I know that. But Iris remains her old self in many ways. The power of concentration has gone, along with the ability to form coherent sentences, and to remember where she is or has been. She does not know that she has written twenty-six remarkable novels, as well as her books on philosophy; received honorary doctorates from major universities; become a Dame of the British Empire. If an admirer or a friend asks her to sign a copy of one of her novels, she looks at it with pleasure and surprise before laboriously writing her name and, if she can, that person's: "For Georgina Smith." "For Dear Reggie." It takes her some time, but the letters are still formed with care, and they resemble, in a surreal way, her old handwriting. She is always eager to oblige. And the old gentleness remains.

Once in the water, Iris cheers up a bit. It is almost too warm, hardly refreshing. But the river's old brown slow-flowing deliciousness remains, and we smile happily at each other as we paddle quietly to and fro. Water-lily leaves, with an occasional fat yellow flower, rock gently at the passage of a pleasure boat. Small, bright-blue dragonflies hover motionless above them. The water is deep, and cooler as we move out from the bank, but we do not go out far. Looking down, I can see Iris's muddy feet, still in their socks, moving in the brown depths.

Once, if there had been little river traffic about, we would have swum straightaway the hundred yards or so across the river and back. Now it is too much trouble, and a possible producer of that omnipresent anxiety of Alzheimer's which speaks to the one who looks after the Alzheimer's sufferer. Not that it would be dangerous; Iris still swims as naturally as a fish. Since we first entered the water here together, forty-four years ago, we have swum in the sea, in lakes and rivers, in pools and ponds, whenever we could and wherever we happened to be.

Iris was never keen on swimming, as such. She never swam fast and noisily or did fancy strokes. It



"Andy may be out next weekend, if he gets down to his beach weight."

was being in the water that she loved. Twice she came quite close to drowning. I think of those times, with the anxiety that has now invaded both our lives, as we approach the river's bank again, to scramble out. This has always been a more difficult and inelegant operation than slipping into the river, but it has never bothered us in the past. The river is as deep near the bank as in mid-stream, the bank itself undercut by the water's flow. I pull myself out first and turn to help Iris. As she takes my hands, her face contracts into that look of childlike dread which so often comes over it now, filling me, too, with worry and fear. Suppose her arm muscles fail her and she slips back into deep water, forgetting how to swim, and letting water pour into her mouth as she opens it in a soundless appeal to me? I know on the spot that we must never come to bathe here again.

OCCASIONALLY, Iris used to ask me about some technical detail she wanted for a novel. Once she inquired about automatic pistols—my old Army training made it easy to answer that one—and sometimes about cars, or wine, or what would be a suitable thing for a certain character to eat. The hero of "The Sea, The Sea" required, so to speak, a very special diet, and I had fun suggesting all sorts of unlikely combinations to which he might be partial: oat bran and boiled onions, fried garlic and sardines, tinned mango and Stilton cheese. Some of these found their way into the novel, and when it won the Booker Prize one of the judges, the philosopher A. J. Ayer, remarked in his prizegiving speech that he had much enjoyed everything in the novel "except for the food."

Only to one of Iris's novels, and that was a long time ago, did I contribute a small section myself. It was in her fourth novel, "The Bell," published in 1958. For a reason I now forget, she asked me to read the first chapter, which has one of her most sibylline, epigrammatic openings. She never used a typewriter, and in her first handwritten version it read, "Dora Greenfield left her husband because she was afraid of him. A year later she returned to him for the same reason." I was thrilled by this instant concision, but as I read on I began to feel an immediate inquisitiveness about young Dora Greenfield and



"I'm afraid this is auf Wiedersehen, Padre. Estelle and I are setting up our own little religion."

her husband, Paul, which the early pages did not satisfy. So arresting were they, as characters, that I wanted to know a little more of them at once, to be given a hint by which to glimpse their potential. I said something of the sort to Iris, who said, "O.K., then, you write something for me."

At the time, I was trying to write a critical study later titled "The Characters of Love." I was bewitched by Henry James, who observed to a friend about one of the ladies in a novel he was writing that he could already take "a stiff examination" on her. Concerning such a personality, he remarked, the author needs to supply a forewarning, "an early intimation of perspective." With this in mind, I set out to produce some idea of what might have happened to Dora and her husband, even if it was to have no part in the book, whose story as yet I did not know.

My idea was that he, as a husband, deeply needed and wanted children, even if he was not necessarily conscious of the fact, while she—being much younger than her husband—did not. I suggested that she had it in her, nonetheless, to become "a prompt and opinionated mother," and that this would be her only means of standing up to Paul. As it was, she was highly alarmed at the prospect of "becoming two people," although, being passive in her manner, she had done nothing to inhibit conception. In the end, she had come back to her husband like an apprehensive sleepwalker, still unconsciously depending on the ability of her fears to "whisk her instantly away, like a small animal."

I produced something to this effect, and the results are on page 7 of the novel, in a longish paragraph. It reads a bit too much in the Jamesian style,

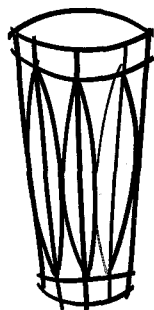
rather than merging into Iris's inimitable originality; but it does, perhaps, have the function of suggesting alternatives and open spaces, which the scope and intent of the novel will not necessarily want to occupy. The novel's theme is the desire for and pursuit of the spiritual life, whether true or false. I had nothing to contribute to Iris's marvellous feeling for what some people hunger for, and how, in consequence, they behave. Indeed, I have very little understanding of the spiritual life; but that has never stopped me from having a passionate appetite for Iris's novels, which I have usually read only after publication.

This sympathy for what might be going on in Iris's mind, together with my inability to understand or enter into it, must have developed quite early in our relationship. Already, by the time of "The Bell," we were beginning that strange and beneficent process in marriage by which a couple can, in the words of the Australian poet A. D. Hope, move "closer and closer apart." The apartness is a part of the closeness, perhaps a recognition of it: certainly a pledge of complete understanding. There is nothing threatening or supervisory about such an understanding, nothing of what couples really mean when they say (or are alleged to say) to confidants or counsellors, "the trouble is that my wife/husband doesn't understand me"—which usually means that one partner in the relationship understands the other one all too well, and doesn't rejoice in the experience.

Still less is such apartness like what the French call *solitude à deux*, the self-isolation of a couple from anything outside their marriage. The solitude I have enjoyed in marriage, and I think Iris has, too, is a little like having a walk by oneself, and knowing that tomorrow, or soon, one will be sharing it with the other, or perhaps again having it alone. It is a solitude, too, that precludes nothing outside the marriage, and sharpens the sense of possible intimacy with things or people in the outside world.

Such sympathy in apartness takes time to grow, however, as well as being quite different in nature from that intoxicating sense of the strangeness of another being which accompanies the

excitements of falling in love. The more I got to know Iris, during the early days of our relationship, the less I understood her. Indeed, I soon began not to want to understand her. I was far too preoccupied at the time to think of such parallels, but it was like living in a fairy story—the kind with sinister overtones and a not always happy ending—in which a young man loves a beautiful maiden who returns his love but is always disappearing into some unknown and mysterious world, about which she will reveal nothing. Eventually, he makes some dire mistake, and she disappears for good. At this distance in time, that comparison seems more or less true, if a bit fanciful. Iris was always disappearing, to "see" her friends (I began to wonder and to dread,



early on, what the word "see" might involve), about whom—unlike the girl in the fairy tale—she was always quite open. I knew their names; I imagined them; I never met them.

And there seemed to be so many of them. Persons who were, in a sense, in my own position. Iris seemed deeply and privately attached to them all. No doubt in all sorts of different ways. I could only hope that she did not talk to any of the others in quite the way that she talked with me, chattered childishly with me, kissed me. This Iris was so different from the grave being I had seen on the bicycle, or at a party in the public domain, that I sometimes wondered what had become of the woman I had fallen in love with. Absurdly, I had imagined our future together as somehow equally grave, a wonderfully serious matter, involving only the pair of us, of course, for no one else in the world was or would be in the least interested in either of us. We were, simply, made for each other, and we would exist on that basis.

The happy childlike girl or woman Iris had now turned into when she was with me was delightful, but also—as I sometimes could not stop myself wistfully thinking—fundamentally unreal, like the girl in the fairy story. This could not be the real Iris. But, with the hindsight that also sees a parallel with the fairy story, I can now feel that I was giving Iris, without my knowing it, the alternative being that she required: the irresponsible, even escapist persona that

she had no idea she wanted or needed.

As our relationship became more serious, and as we became aware that we were travelling inevitably toward a separation or a solution we couldn't anticipate or foresee, Iris once or twice mentioned the myth of Proteus. This was in reply to my despairing comment that I couldn't understand her, or the different person she became for the many others with whom she seemed, in my view, helplessly entangled. "Remember Proteus," she used to say. "Just keep tight hold of me and it will be all right." Proteus had the power of changing himself into any shape he wished—lion, serpent, monster, fish—but if any opponent held him tightly throughout all these transformations he was compelled in the end to surrender, and to resume his proper shape as a divinity.

I used to reply gloomily that I was not—as a mere professor of English—the kind of person who would be a match for Proteus, lacking a hero's resources of muscle power and concentration. Then we would laugh and become our secret and childish selves again—as we had been when we first crawled through the undergrowth and slipped secretly into the river.

A WOMAN I sometimes meet, whose husband is, like Iris, an Alzheimer's sufferer, once cheerfully remarked, "Like being chained to a corpse, isn't it?" Then she amended the remark, giving me a slightly roguish glance: "Oh, a much loved corpse, naturally."

I was repelled by the suggestion that Iris's affliction could have anything in common with that of this jolly woman's husband. It's not an unusual reaction, as I've come to realize, among Alzheimer partners. One needs very much to feel that the unique individuality of one's spouse has not been lost in the common symptoms of a clinical condition.

But the woman's image of the corpse and the chain did not lose its power to haunt me. There is a story by Thomas Hardy called "On the Western Circuit," in which a young barrister meets a country girl while accompanying the rounds of the circuit judge. They fall in love and he makes her pregnant. Because she is illiterate, she implores the sympathetic married woman in whose house she works as a maid to write letters for her to the young man. Her mis-

tress does so, and as a result of their correspondence begins to fall for the young man herself. He, instead of escaping from his predicament, as he had first intended, becomes so charmed by the girl's sensible and loving little letters that he determines to marry her. The marriage takes place in London, and the sole meeting between the young man and the girl's employer, before she returns to her own lonely and barren married life in Wessex, reveals to him their involuntary intimacy. The love letters she has written have made him love her—not the girl—and he is left to face the future fettered to an unchosen partner, like a slave chained to another in a galley.

I remembered the story while the woman was speaking. Our situations were not the same as that of the young man and the girl. Fate had not deceived us. We had known our partners as equals over many years, told and listened and communed together, until communication had dwindled and faltered and all but ceased. No more letters, no more words. An Alzheimer's sufferer begins many sentences, usually with an anxious repetitive query, but they remain unfinished, the want unexpressed. Usually it is predictable and easily satisfied, but Iris produces every day many such queries, involving "You know, that person," or, simply, "that..." which take time and effort to unravel. Often they remain totally enigmatic, related to some unidentifiable man or woman in the past who has swum up to the surface of her mind, as if encountered yesterday. At such times, I feel my own mind and memory faltering; it is as if they'd been required to perform a function too far outside their own beat and practice.

The continuity of joking can very often rescue such moments. A burst of laughter, snatches of doggerel, song, teasing nonsense rituals once lovingly exchanged awake an abruptly happy response, and a sudden beaming smile that must resemble those moments in the past between explorers and savages, when some sort of clowning pantomime on the part of the former seems to have evoked instant comprehension and amusement on the

part of the latter. At cheerful moments, over drinks or in the car, Iris sometimes twitters away incomprehensibly but self-confidently, happily convinced that an animated exchange is taking place. This prompts me to produce my own stream of consciousness, silly sentences, or mashed-up quotations. "The tyrant of the Chersonese was freedom's best and bravest friend," I assure her, giving her a solemnly meaningful look. At which she nods her head gravely, and seems to act out a conspiring smile, as if the ringing confidence of Byron's lines mean a lot to her, too.

Our mode of communication seems like underwater sonar, each of us bouncing pulsations off the other and listening for an echo. The baffling moments when I cannot understand what she is saying, or about whom or what—moments that can produce in Iris tears and anxieties, though never, thank goodness, the raging frustration typical of many Alzheimer's sufferers—can sometimes be dispelled by my embarking on a jokey parody of helplessness, and trying to make it mutual: both of us at a loss for words.

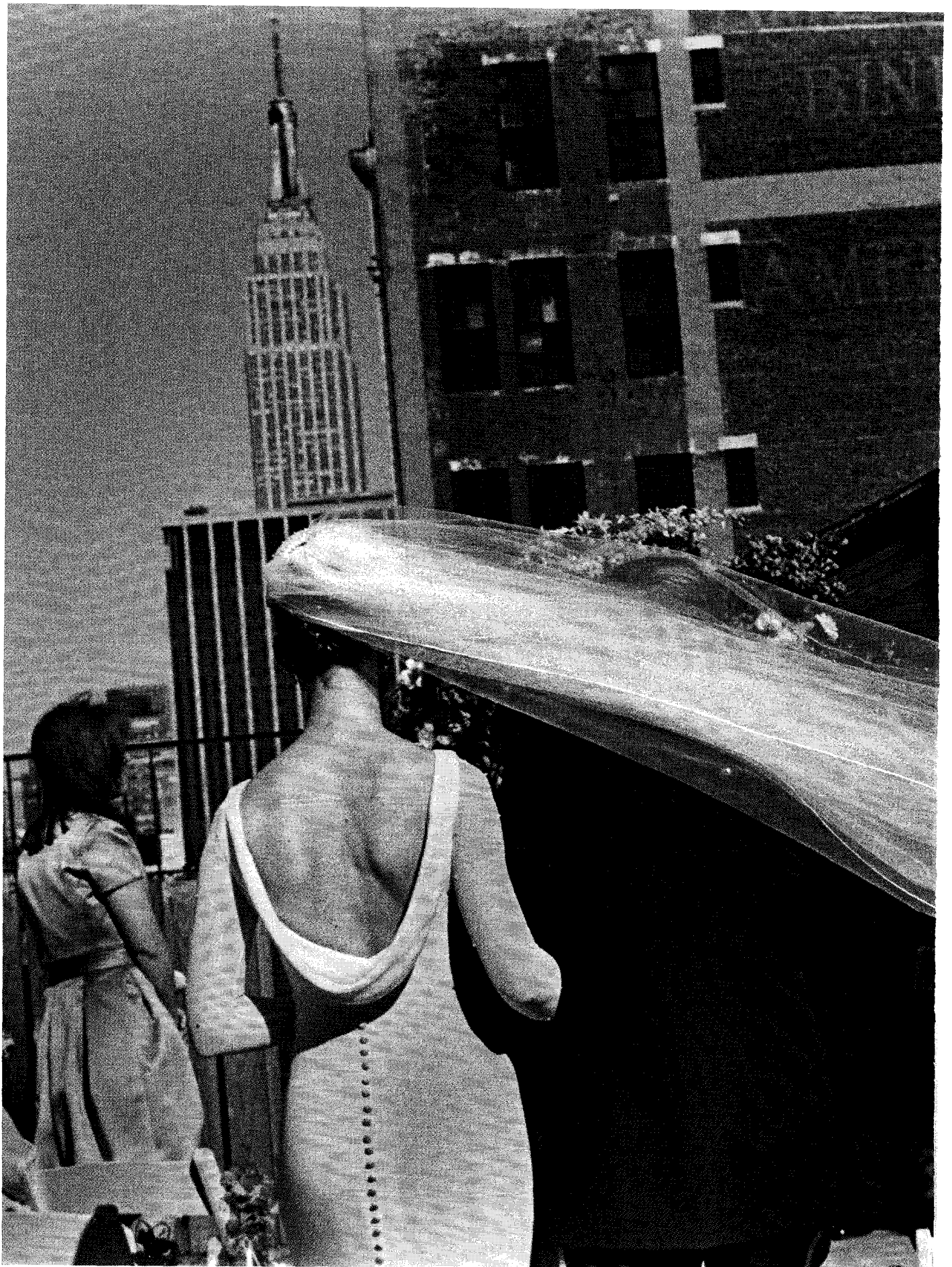
At happy moments, Iris seems to find words more easily than I do—like the swallows when we lived in the country. Sitting on the telephone wire outside our bedroom window, a row of

swallows would converse animatedly with one another, always, it seemed, signing off each burst of twittering speech with a word that sounded like "Weatherby," delivered on a rising note. Now I tease Iris by saying, "You're just like a Weatherby, chattering away." She loves to be teased, but when I make the tease a tender one by adding, "I love listening to you," her face clouds over. She can always tell the difference between the irresponsibility of a joke or a straight tease and the note of "caring" or of "loving care"—which, however earnest and true, always sounds inauthentic.

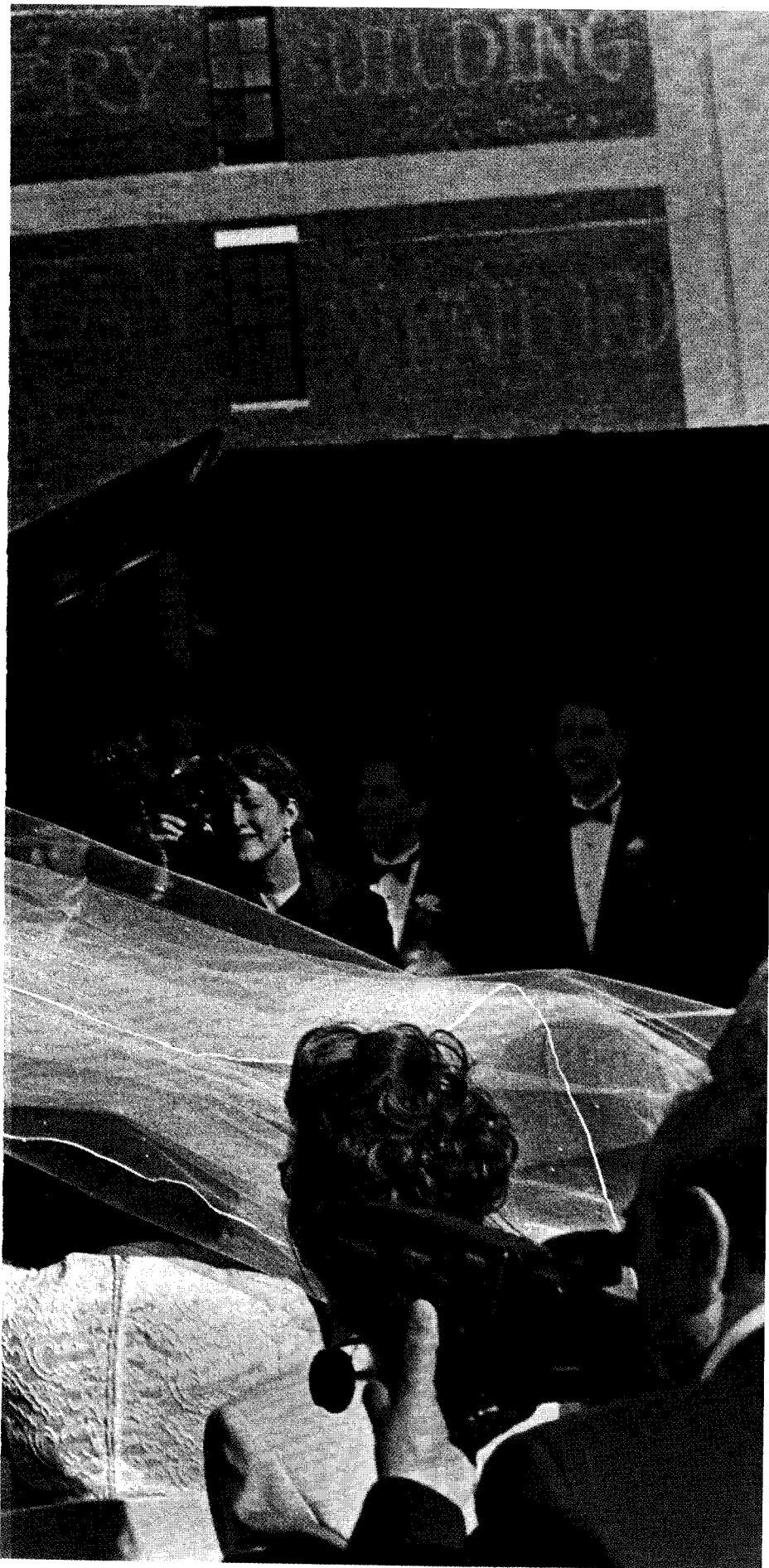
Most days are, for her, a sort of despair, although despair suggests a conscious and positive state whereas what she feels is a vacancy that frightens her by its lack of dimension. She mutters "I'm a fool" or "Why didn't I?" or "I must," and I try to seem to explain the trouble while rapidly suggesting that we must post a letter, walk around the block, go shopping in the car. Something urgent, practical, giving the illusion of sense and routine. The Reverend Sydney Smith, a benevolent clergyman of Jane Austen's time, urged a parishioner in the grip of depression to take "short views of human life—not further than dinner or tea." I used to quote this to Iris, when her troubles began, as if I



"First of all, this meeting never happened."



CITY PLANNING Tradition, fair weather, and family pressure conspire to make the summer months the busiest for walking the aisle. The and sometimes sobering kaleidoscope of wedding scenes from around the world. Among the artists represented is the Times photographer



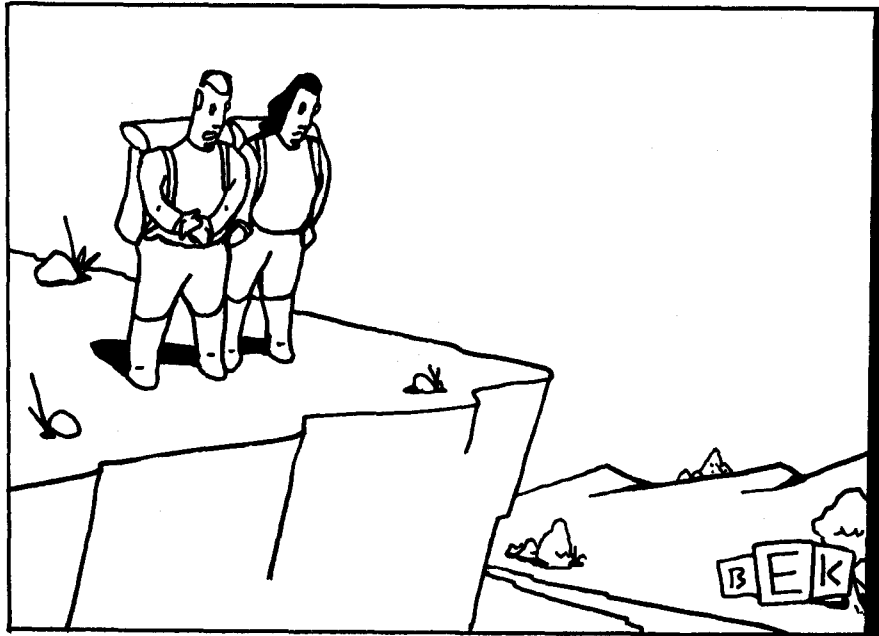
oup photography show "A Summer Wedding," on view at the Leica Gallery, offers a celebratory forward Keating, who made this windy urban hymn for the "Vows" column of the Sunday Times.

were recommending a real policy, which could intelligibly be followed. Now I repeat it sometimes as an incantation or a joke, which can raise a laugh if it is accompanied by some horsing around, a live pantomime of "short views" being taken.

Smiling transforms Iris's face, bringing it back to what it used to be like, and with an added glow that can seem almost supernatural. The Alzheimer's face has been clinically described as the "lion face"—an apparently odd comparison but in fact a very apt one. The features settle into a leonine impassivity that does remind one of the king of beasts and the way his broad, expressionless mask is represented in painting and sculpture. The Alzheimer's face is neither tragic nor comic, as a face can appear in other forms of dementia, suggesting human emotion in its most distorted guises. The Alzheimer's face indicates only an absence. It is, in the most literal sense, a mask.

That is why the sudden appearance of a smile is so extraordinary. Then the lion face becomes the face of the Virgin Mary, with a gravity that gives such a smile, in paintings and sculpture, its deepest meaning. Only a joke survives—the last thing to find its way into consciousness when the brain is atrophied. After all, the Virgin Mary presides over the greatest joke of the lot, the wonderful fable made up, elaborated, repeated all over the world. No wonder she is smiling.

My ancient Greek is virtually nonexistent; and Iris's—which once was extensive—has gone completely. I used to try reading the "Agamemnon" and other Greek plays to her in translation, but it was not a success. Nor was any other attempt at reading aloud. It all seemed and felt unnatural. I did several chapters of "The Lord of the Rings" and "The Tale of Genji," two of Iris's old favorites, before I realized this. For someone who was accustomed not so much to read books as to slip into their world as effortlessly as she slipped into a river or the sea, this laborious procession of words clumping into her consciousness must have seemed a tedious irrelevance, although she recognized the people and events described. But the relation of such recognition to true memory is clearly a painful one. Tolkien and Lady Murasaki had been inhabitants of her



"It makes me realize how small you are."

mind, as native to its world as were the people and events who so mysteriously came to her in her process of creation. To meet them again in this way was an embarrassment.

I think that the attempt at reading and being read to was also a reminder to Iris of the loss of identity—although "reminder" is hardly the word for what she must be feeling, for an Alzheimer's patient is not usually conscious, in any definable way, of what has happened. Some sufferers do remain conscious of their state, paradoxical as this seems. The torment of knowing that you cannot speak or think what you want must be intolerable, and I have met patients in whom such a torment is clearly visible. But when Iris speaks to me the result seems normal to her and to me surprisingly fluent, provided I do not listen to what is being said but apprehend it in a matrimonial way, as the voice of familiarity, and thus of recognition.

Time constitutes an anxiety because its conventional shape and progression have gone, leaving only a perpetual query. There are some days when "When are we leaving?" never stops, though the question is repeated without agitation. Indeed, there can seem something quite peaceful about it, as if it hardly mattered when we went, or where, and to stay at home might in any case be preferable. In Faulkner's novel

"Soldier's Pay," the blinded airman says to his friend, "When am I going to get out?" This makes one flinch: the writer has contrived, unerringly, to put the reader in the blind man's place. Iris's query does not, in itself, suggest desire for change or release into a former state of being; nor does she want to know when we are getting in the car and going out to lunch. The journey on which we are leaving may for her mean the final one; or, if that sounds too portentous, simply some sort of disappearance from the daily life that, without her work, must have lost all sense and identity.

Iris once told me that the question of identity had always puzzled her. In fact, she thought that she herself hardly possessed such a thing, whatever it was. I replied that she must know what it was like to be oneself, even to revel in the consciousness of oneself, as a secret and separate person—a person unknown to any other. She smiled, was amused, and looked uncomprehending. It was not something she bothered about. "Then you live in your work? Like Keats and Shakespeare and all that?" I said. She disclaimed any such comparison; and she did not seem particularly interested when I went on to speak of the well-known Romantic distinction between the great egocentric writers, like Wordsworth or Milton, whose sense of self

was so overpowering that it included everything else, and those identity-free spirits, like Shakespeare and Keats, for whom being is not what they are but the world they live in and reveal. As a philosopher, she, I suspect, found all such distinctions crude. Perhaps one has to be very much aware of oneself as a person in order to find them at all meaningful or interesting. Nobody less narcissistic than Iris can be imagined.

Conceivably, it is the persons who hug their identity most closely to themselves for whom the condition of Alzheimer's is most dreadful. Iris's own lack of a sense of identity seemed to float her more gently into the Alzheimer's world of preoccupied emptiness. Placidly, every night, she insists on laying out quantities of her clothing on my side of the bed, and when I quietly remove them back they come again. She wants to look after me—is that it? It may be a simpler sort of confusion, for when we go to bed she often asks me which side she should be on. Or is it something deeper and fuller, less conscious and less "caring" than that far too self-conscious adjective suggests? She has never wanted to look after me in the past, thank goodness; indeed, one of the pleasures of living with Iris was her serenely benevolent unawareness of one's daily welfare. So restful. She never needed to tell herself to look after me. But when I broke my leg once in the snow at Christmas, and had to lie up for a few days in Banbury hospital, a dozen miles off, she came and stayed in a bed-and-breakfast hotel outside the hospital gate. I besought her to remain at home and work, instead of wasting her time. There was nothing she could do. But no. She stayed there until I was fit enough to come home with her.

WE were married in 1956, nearly three years after we first met. Our idea for a honeymoon was to take a cultural tour, in a leisurely manner, down through France and over the Alps into northern Italy, during which we would stop, whenever we felt like it, to get ourselves wet.

Our first swim was in a deep, placid tributary of the Somme—perhaps the place of the poem by Wilfred Owen, where hospital barges had been moored during those futile offensives of the First World War. The next swim was

much farther south, in a steep and wild wooded valley, with pine and chestnut growing up the mountains. The water was warm and the stream so secluded that we slipped in with nothing on. Usually cautious, Iris may have felt that, since we were in France, Anglo-Saxon inhibition could be discarded. In this remote spot, my feet encountered a smooth round object in the shallows. It was half buried in the ooze, but I fished it up without difficulty and found an object like a Greek or Roman amphora, earth-colored and cracked in one or two places. It was clearly not ancient—we found a trade name stamped on the base—and I was about to let it sink back into its underwater home when Iris, treading water beside me, vigorously demurred. Even at that date, she wanted to keep everything she found. It lived on for years in a corner of our garden back home, until its cracks were found out by the frost and it came to pieces.

After setting it down on the bank, we slipped in again for another swim. Iris seemed dreamy and absent. "Suppose we had found a great old bell," she said as we dried ourselves. I pointed out that this would hardly be likely in such a wild spot, far from any town or village. But her imagination was equal to that one.

"It could have been stolen from a belfry and buried in the river until they could dispose of it. People at home are stealing lead from country churches all the time, aren't they? Then the thieves here never came back."

"Quite a recent event? Nothing legendary about it?"

"No, wait. The church was desecrated at the Reformation by those...what did they call them in France?" she appealed, as she stood beside me, an earnest figure streaked all over with river mud, which she was vaguely spreading over herself with a towel.

"Huguenots?"

"That's it. The Huguenots got down the bell and wanted to break it up or melt it or something, but some devoted worshippers of the old church managed to steal it away and bring it here for safekeeping."

Although she had done ancient history in her exams, Iris had done

her best papers in philosophy, and her sense of the historical was certainly rather sketchy. But, as her novels show, her imagination possessed its own brand of sometimes almost pedantic accuracy.

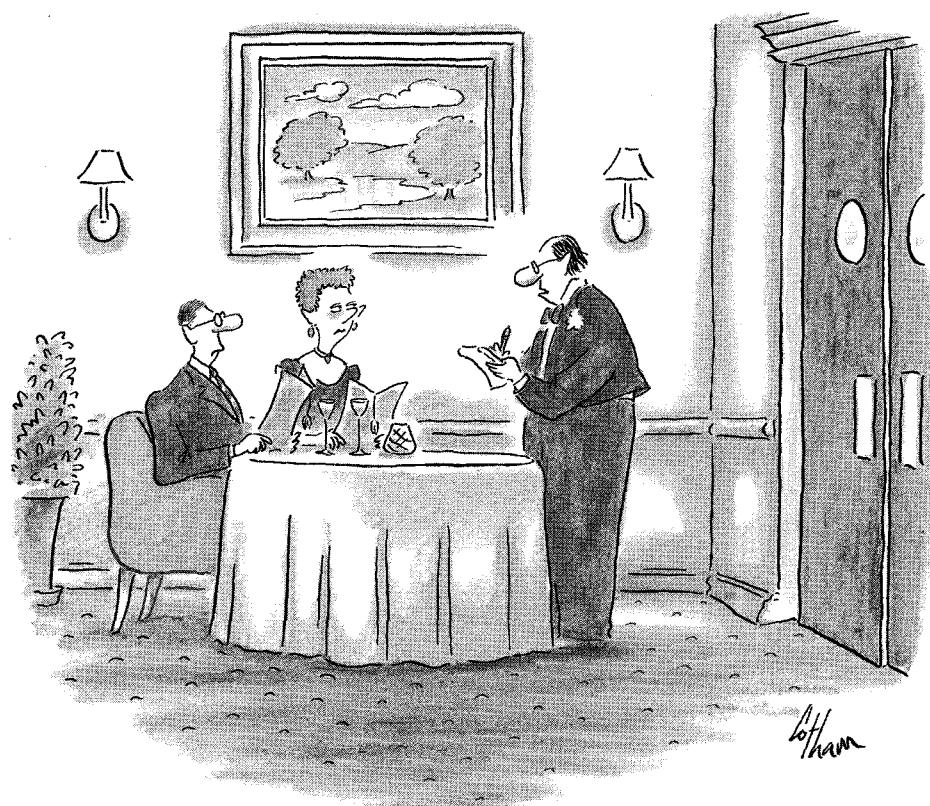
The most striking episode in "The Bell" certainly came out of that river. A great bell is found in the lake on the grounds of an old abbey, now the center of a modern religious community. The symbol of the bell is enigmatic; not so the penetrating and contrasting account of characters who wish to try to lead the religious life. I always felt that there was something wonderfully literal about the discovery of the great bell, which reminded me of "Alice in Wonderland," one of Iris's favorite books.

The life of inanimate things was always close to her. I used to tease her about Wordsworth's flower, which the poet was confident "enjoys the air it breathes." "Never mind about flowers," Iris would say, impatiently and somewhat mysteriously, adding, "There are other things that matter much more." She felt real sadness for abandoned bottles, and I think of that now when she stoops like an old tramp to pick up scraps of candy paper or cigarette ends

from the pavement. She feels at one with them, and will find them a home if she can.

Iris is, without question, the most genuinely modest person I have ever met. Modesty is apt to be something acted, by each individual in his or her own way—part of the armory with which people intend to confront the world. Iris has no pride in being modest: I don't think she even knows she is. The normal anxieties and preoccupations of successful writers about status and the future—whether, to put it crudely, they can keep it up—were with her completely absent. Now that she has forgotten all about it anyway, I am struck by the almost eerie resemblance between the amnesia of the present and the tranquil indifference of the past. In the old days, she went on secretly and quietly doing her work, never wishing to talk about it, never needing to compare or discuss or contrast, never reading reviews or wanting to hear about them, never needing the continual reassurance from friends or public or the media which most writers require in order to go on being sure that they are writers.

Iris's works, at least to me, are genuinely mysterious, like Shakespeare's.



"I think you should be aware that the chef is a summer intern."

About her greatness as a novelist, I have no doubts at all, although she has never needed, possessed, or tried to cultivate the charisma that is the most vital element to the success of a sage or mage. Her books create a new world, which is also, in an inspired sense, an ordinary one. They have no axe to grind; they are devoid of intellectual pretension, or the need to be different. They are not part of a personality that fascinates and mesmerizes its admirers. Although any of her readers might say or feel that a person or an event in her fiction could occur only in a Murdoch novel, this does not mean that the personality of the writer herself is, in any obvious sense, remarkable.

WHERE Iris is concerned, my memory, like a snug-fitting garment, seems to have zipped itself up to the present second. As I work in bed early in the morning, typing on my old portable with Iris asleep beside me, her presence seems as it always was, and as it always should be. I know she must once have been different, but I have no true memory of a different person.

Waking up for a peaceful second or two, she looks vaguely at the Olivetti lying on my knees, cushioned by one of her jerseys. Not long ago, when I asked if it disturbed her, she said that she liked to hear that funny noise in the morning. She must be used to it, although a couple of years ago she would have been getting up herself at this time—seven o'clock—and preparing to start her own day. Nowadays, she lies quietly asleep, sometimes giving a little grunt or murmur, and often sleeping well past nine, when I rouse and dress her. This ability to sleep like a cat, at all hours of the day and night, must be one of the rare blessings that sometimes go with Alzheimer's, the converse of the anxiety state that comes on in wakefulness.

Most days, dressing is a reasonably happy and comic business. I am still far from sure which way round her underpants are supposed to go: we usually decide between us that it doesn't matter. Trousers are simpler: hers have a grubby white label on the inside at the back. I ought to give her a bath, or at least a wash of some sort, since baths are tricky, but I tend to postpone it

A LEAK SOMEWHERE

No toy in a bathtub, the Titanic;
but on our twenty-one-inch screen
it's faintly laughable, as Barbara Stanwyck
and her daughter in their lifeboat gasp
at the sight of the great vessel sliding
into the North Atlantic like a spoon.

Yet only faintly laughable.
When the ship blows up, with Stanwyck's son
and husband on it, the four of us
(warm beneath one blanket flung
across a comfy sofa in
the lifeboat of our living room)

bob with the waves of melodrama.
How ironic! Their family split
even on board, but along other lines:
living abroad had spoiled the girl
(Annette was so pretentious she
addressed her fellow-Yanks in French),

but Norman, with his normal name,
might still be saved in Michigan.
Or that was Stanwyck's plan. And now
he's sinking with shallow Clifton Webb,
his Paris-besotted father, to
a depth where such distinctions are all

for naught. The ship's a symbol for
society, we tell our children—
belowdecks, into the portholed maws
of furnaces, bare-torsoed men
stoke coal until their sweat runs black;
when the iceberg slices through the hull,

from day to day. For some reason, it is easier to do the job in cold blood, as it were, at an idle moment later in the day. Iris never objects to this; she seems in a curious way to accept it as both quite normal and wholly exceptional, as if the two concepts had merged for her. Perhaps this is why she seems to accept her daily state as if no other had ever existed: assuming, too, that no one else would find her changed in any way; just as my memory works with her only as she is now, and—so my memory seems to assume—must always have been.

At the same time, Iris's social reflexes are, in a weird way, still very much in place. If someone comes to the door—the postman, the man to read the gas meter—she receives him with her social

smile, and calls for me in those unhurried, slightly gracious tones that married couples automatically use on each other in the presence of a stranger: "Oh, I think it is the man who has come to read the meter, darling." In the same way, she deals instinctively with more complex social situations, seeming to follow the conversation, prepared to bridge a silence by asking a question. It's usually "Where do you come from?" or "What are you doing now?"—questions that get repeated many times in the course of a social event. Other people, visitors or friends, adjust themselves well to these repetitions as soon as they grasp what is happening.

In the old days of our marriage, I would sometimes produce what in childhood used to be called "a tantrum,"

they're flooded in an instant. Above
in steerage, the crammed-in families of
the kerchiefed, overexcitable poor
race for the door and, as water climbs,
scramble upstairs where Guggenheims
and Astors (so well bred they barely

raise an eyebrow even for
historic personal disasters)
set down their hands of bridge, and don
life jackets like the latest fashion.
Not enough lifeboats? Noblesse oblige,
everybody is at once noble,

and an instinctive revolution
reshuffles the classes: women and children
first. Down the Jacob's ladder
of rope they struggle to the shaky
safety of going on living, while
those left behind on the heavenly

height of the tilting ship take solace
in their perfectly rehearsed rendition
of "Nearer, My God, to Thee."
Oh, you and I can laugh. But having
turned off the set, and led the children
upstairs into dry beds, we sense

that hidden in the house a fine
crack—nothing spectacular,
only a leak somewhere—is slowly
widening to claim each of us
in random order, and we start to rock
in one another's arms.

—MARY JO SALTER

if something had gone wrong or not
been done properly, something for
which, rightly or wrongly, I held Iris re-
sponsible. She would then become
calm, reassuring, almost maternal, not
as if deliberately but with some deep,
unconscious, female response that nor-
mally had no need to come to the sur-
face. Iris, in general, was never "female"
at all—a fact for which I sometimes re-
membered to be grateful. Now I have
learned to make, on occasions, a delib-
erate use of tantrums. If she has been
following me all day, interrupting tire-
some business or letter writing (very
often letters to her fans), I erupt in what
can seem even to me an uncontrolled
fit of exasperation, stamping on the
floor and throwing the papers and let-
ters on it, waving my hands in the air. It

always works. Iris says "Sorry... sorry,"
and pats me before going quietly away.
She will be back soon, but that doesn't
matter. My tantrum has reassured
her as no amount of caring, or
calming efforts to reply to her
rationally, could have done.

The lady who told me in
her deliberately jolly way that
living with an Alzheimer's pa-
tient was like being chained
to a corpse went on to an even greater
access of desperate facetiousness. "And,
as you and I know, it's a corpse that
complains all the time." I don't know
it. In spite of her anxious and perpet-
ual queries, Iris seems not to know
how to complain. She never has. Alz-
heimer's, which can accentuate per-
sonality traits to the point of demonic

parody, seems only to exaggerate the
natural goodness in her.

On a good day, her need for a lov-
ing presence, mutual pappings and mur-
murs, has something angelic about it;
she seems to become the presence found
in an icon. It is more important for her
still on the days of silent tears, when her
grief is unconscious of that mysterious
world of creation she has lost and yet is
aware that something is missing.

DECEMBER 25, 1997. London is
uncannily silent on Christmas
morning. If there are churchgoers and
church bells, we see none, hear none.
The silence and the emptiness seem all
the better.

We walk to Kensington Gardens, up
the deserted street, between the tall
stucco façades falling into Edwardian
decay but still handsome. Henry James
lived on the left here; Browning farther
up, on the right. We pass their blue
plaques, set in the white walls. A few
yards back, we passed the great gloomy
red brick mansions where T. S. Eliot
had a flat for many years. His widow
must be in church now.

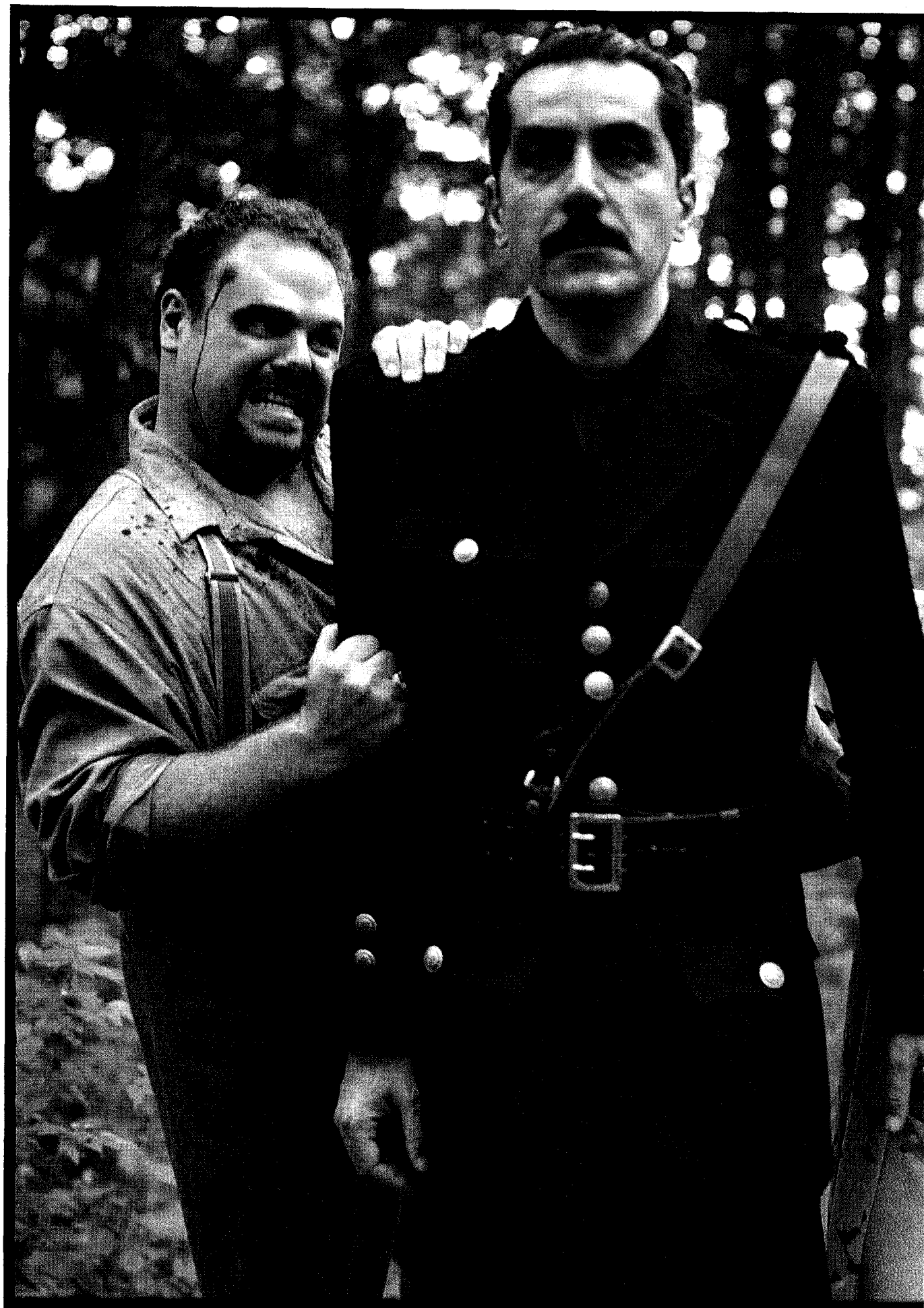
Our route on Christmas morning is
always the same—we have been doing
this for years. As we pass the spectral
houses, I utter a little bit of patter like a
guide. Henry James, Robert Browning,
T. S. Eliot. We used to gaze up at their
windows, talk a bit about them, on
mornings like these. Now I just men-
tion the names. Does Iris remember
them? She smiles a little. They are still
familiar, those names, as familiar as this
unique morning silence. Just for this
morning, those writers have laid their
pens down, as Iris herself has done,
and are taking a well-earned rest, look-
ing forward to their dinners.

Thackeray, the gourmet, whose
house is just around the corner,
would have looked forward
to his with special keenness.

Now we can see the park,
and beyond it the handsome
Williamite façade of Kensington Pal-
ace. A few dogs here, unimpressed by
Christmas but seeming merrier than
usual, in contrast with the silence. There
is one bell now, tolling somewhere on a
sweet high note. Up in the sky, the jet
trails move serenely on, their murmur
fainter when it comes.

The Round Pond. Canada geese





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stand meditatively, for once making no demands. The same path as usual, downward, to the Serpentine. Nobody around the Peter Pan statue. Not even a Japanese couple with a camera. Young Pan himself, bronze fingers delicately crooked, his double pipe to his lips, has the sublimely sinister indifference of childhood. Captain Hook, his great enemy, was always made nervous by that pose. He considered Peter to have "good form" without knowing it, which is, of course, the best form of all. Poor Hook was in despair about this. It made Iris laugh when I told her all this, before we were married. I read a bit of the book to her. Iris, I recall, was so amused that she later put the good-form business into one of her novels.

As we walk around and admire, I tell Iris that my mother assured me that if I looked hard enough over the railings, into the private dells where the bluebells and daffodils come up in spring, I might see fairies, perhaps even Peter Pan himself. I believed her. I could almost believe her now, with the tranquil sunshine in the park making a midwinter spring, full of the illusion of flowers and fairies as well as real birdsong.

Iris is listening, which she rarely does, and smiling, too. There have been no anxious pleas this morning, no tears, none of those broken sentences whose only meaning is the dread in her voice

and the demand for reassurance. Something or someone this morning has reassured her, given her, for an hour or two, what the prayer book calls "that peace which the world cannot give."

Perhaps it is the Christmas ritual. We shall return to my brother, who has attended Matins this morning at Chelsea Old Church, where Sir Thomas More used once to worship. We shall eat sardines and sausages and scrambled eggs together, with a bottle or two of the Bulgarian red wine that goes with everything. I shall do the eggs and sausages, with Iris standing beside me, and we shall bring the wine.

A snooze then. Iris sleeps deeply. Later, we listen to carols and Christmas music. And I have the illusion, which fortunate Alzheimer's partners must feel at such times, that life is just the same, has never changed. I cannot imagine Iris any different. Her loss of memory becomes, in a sense, my own. In a muzzy way—the Bulgarian wine, no doubt—I find myself thinking of the Christmas birth, and also of Wittgenstein's comment that death is not "an event in life." We are born to live only from day to day. "Short views of human life—not further than dinner or tea." The Reverend Sydney Smith's advice is most easily taken during these ritualized days: the ancient saving routine of Christmas, which for us today has been twice blessed.

Life is no longer bringing the pair of us "closer and closer apart," in A. D. Hope's tenderly ambiguous words. Every day, we move closer and closer together. We could not do otherwise. There is a certain comic irony—happily, not darkly, comic—that, after more than forty years of our taking marriage for granted, marriage has decided it is tired of this and is taking a hand in the game. Purposefully, persistently, involuntarily, our marriage is now getting somewhere. It is giving us no choice, and I am glad of that.

Every day, we are physically closer; and Iris's little "mouse cry," as I think of it, signifying loneliness in the next room, the wish to be back beside me, seems less and less forlorn, more simple, more natural. She is not sailing into the dark: The voyage is over, and under the dark escort of Alzheimer's she has arrived somewhere. So have I. ♦

INTO THE WOODS

Along the wooded shores of Otsego Lake, in Cooperstown, New York, the quarrelling trio at left can be heard, through August 24th, in the Glimmerglass Opera festival staging of Puccini's lurid shocker "Tosca," which the director, Mark Lamos, has set in the jackbooted era of Mussolini. Ian DeNolfo stars as the rebellious painter Cavaradossi, Michele Bianchini as the venal chief of police Baron Scarpia, and Amy Johnson as the diva who commits what may be the most justifiable homicide in all of opera. The production, which will be repeated at New York City Opera from September 10th to October 14th, puts a steely polish on the dark warhorse.

Photograph by Max Vadukul

FICTION

NAKED WOMAN PLAYING CHOPIN

A Fargo romance.

BY LOUISE ERDRICH



street that runs along the Red River follows the curves of a stream that is muddy and shallow, full of brush, silt, and oxbows that throw the whole town off the strict clean grid laid out by railroad plat. The river floods most springs and drags local back yards into its flow, even though its banks are strengthened with riprap and piled high with concrete torn from reconstructed streets and basements. It is a hopelessly complicated river, one that freezes deceptively, breaks rough, drowns one or two every year in its icy flow. It is a dead river in some places, one that harbors only carp and bullheads. Wild in others, it lures moose down from Canada into the city limits. At one time, when the land along its banks was newly broken, paddleboats and barges of grain moved grandly from its source to Winnipeg, for the river flows inscrutably north. And, over on the Minnesota side, across from what is now church land and the town park, a farm spread generously up and down the river and back into wide hot fields.

The bonanza farm belonged to Easterners who had sold a foundry in Vermont and with their money bought the flat vastness that lay along the river. They raised astounding crops when the land was young—rutabagas that weighed sixty pounds, wheat unbearably lush, corn on cobs like truncheons. Then there were six grasshopper years during which even the handles on the

hoes and rakes were eaten and a cavalry soldier, too, was partially devoured while he lay drunk in the insects' path. The enterprise suffered losses on a grand scale. The farm was split among four brothers, eventually, who then sold off half each so that, by the time Berndt Vogel escaped the trench war of Europe where he'd been chopped mightily but inconclusively in six places by a British cavalry sabre and then kicked by a horse so that his jaw never shut right again, there was just one beautiful and peaceful swatch of land about to go for grabs. In the time it took him to gather—by forswearing women, drinking low beers only, and working twenty-hour days—the money to retrieve the farm from the local bank, its price had dropped further and further, as the earth rose up in a great ship of destruction. Sails of dust carried half of Berndt's lush dirt over the horizon, but enough remained for him to plant and reap six fields.

So Berndt survived. On his land there stood an old hangar-like barn, with only one small part still in use—housing a cow, chickens, one depressed pig. Berndt kept the rest in decent repair, not only because as a good German he must waste nothing that came his way, but also because he saw in those grand, dust-filled shafts of light something that he could worship. It had once housed teams of great blue Percherons and Belgian draft horses. Only one horse was left, old and made of brutal velvet, but the others still moved in the powerful synchronicity of his dreams. He fussed over the remaining mammoth and imagined his farm one day entire, vast and teeming, crews of men under his command, a cookhouse, a bunkhouse, equipment, a woman and children sturdily determined to their toil, and a garden in which seeds bearing the scented pinks and sharp red geraniums of his childhood were planted and thrived.

How surprised he was to find, one afternoon, as though sown by the wind and summoned by his dreams, a woman standing barefoot, starved and frowzy in the doorway of his barn. She was a pale flower, nearly bald and dressed in a rough shift. He blinked stupidly at the vision. Light poured around her like smoke and swirled at her gesture of need. She spoke.

"Ich habe Hunger."

By the way she said it, he knew she was a Swabian and therefore—he tried to thrust the thought from his mind—liable to have certain unruly habits in bed. He passed his hand across his eyes. Through the gown of nearly transparent muslin he could see that her breasts were, excitingly, bound tightly to her chest with strips of cloth. He blinked hard. Looking directly into her eyes, he experienced the vertigo of confronting a female who did not blush or look away but held him with an honest human calm. He thought at first that she must be a loose woman, fleeing a brothel—had Fargo got so big? Or escaping an evil marriage, perhaps. He didn't know she was from God.

IN the center of the town on the other side of the river there stood a convent made of yellow bricks. Hauled halfway across Minnesota from Little Falls by pious drivers, they still held the peculiar sulfurous moth gold of the clay outside that town. The word "Fleisch" was etched in shallow letters on each one: Fleisch Company Brickworks. Donated to the nuns at cost. The word, of course, was covered by mortar each time a brick was laid. However, because she had organized a few discarded bricks behind the convent into the base for a small birdbath, one of the younger nuns knew, as she gazed at the mute order of the convent's wall, that she lived within the secret repetition of that one word.

She had once been Agnes DeWitt and now was Sister Cecellia, shorn,

FILIP PAGOWSKI

houseled, clothed in black wool and bound in starched linen of heatless white. She not only taught but lived music, existed for those hours when she could be concentrated in her being—which was half music, half divine light, flesh only to the degree that she could not admit otherwise. At the piano keyboard, absorbed into the notes that rose beneath her hands, she existed in her essence, a manifestation of compelling sound. Her hands were long and thick-veined, very white, startling against her habit. She rubbed them with lard and beeswax nightly to keep them supple. During the day, when she graded papers or used the blackboard her hands twitched and drummed, patterned and repatterned difficult fingerings. She was no trouble to live with and her obedience was absolute. Only, and with increasing concentration, she played Brahms, Beethoven, Debussy, Schubert, and Chopin.

It wasn't that she neglected her other duties; rather, it was the playing itself—distilled of longing—that disturbed her sisters. In her music Sister Cecellia explored profound emotions. She spoke of her faith and doubt, of her passion as the bride of Christ, of her loneliness, shame, ultimate redemption. The Brahms she played was thoughtful, the Schubert confounding. Debussy was all contrived nature and yet as gorgeous as a meadowlark. Beethoven contained all messages, but her crescendos lacked conviction. When it came to Chopin, however, she did not use the flowery ornamentation or the endless trills and insipid floribunda of so many of her day. Her playing was of the utmost sincerity. And Chopin, played simply, devastates the heart. Sometimes a pause between the piercing sorrows of minor notes made a sister scrubbing the floor weep into the bucket where she dipped her rag so that the convent's boards, washed in tears, seemed to creak in a human tongue. The air of the house thickened with sighs.

Sister Cecellia, however, was emptied. Thinned. It was as though her soul were neatly removed by a drinking straw and siphoned into the green pool of quiet that lay beneath the rippling cascade of notes. One day, exquisite agony built and released, built higher, released more forcefully until slow heat spread between her fingers, up her

arms, stung at the points of her bound breasts, and then shot straight down.

Her hands flew off the keyboard—she crouched as though she had been shot, saw yellow spots, and experienced a peaceful wave of oneness in which she entered pure communion. She was locked into the music, held there safely, entirely understood. Such was her innocence that she didn't know she was experiencing a sexual climax, but believed, rather, that what she felt was the natural outcome of this particular nocturne played to the utmost of her skills—and so it came to be. Chopin's spirit became her lover. His flats caressed her. His whole notes sank through her body like clear pebbles. His atmospheric trills were the flicker of a tongue. His pauses before the downward sweep of notes nearly drove her insane.

The Mother Superior knew something had to be done when she herself woke, her face bathed with sweat and tears, to the insinuating soft largo of the Prelude in E Minor. In those notes she remembered the death of her mother and sank into an endless afternoon of her loss. The Mother Superior then grew, in her heart, a weed of rage against the God who had taken a mother from a seven-year-old child whose world she was, entirely, without question—heart, arms, guidance, soul—until by evening she felt fury steaming from the hot marrow of her bones and stopped herself.

"Oh, God, forgive me," the Superior prayed. She considered humunculation, but then rushed down to the piano room instead, and with all of the strength in her wide old arms gathered and hid from Cecellia every piece of music but the Bach.

After that, for some weeks, there was relief. Sister Cecellia turned to the Two-Part Inventions. Her fingers moved on the keys with the precision of an insect building its nest. She played each as though she were constructing an airtight box. Stealthily, once Cecellia had moved on to Bach's other works, the Mother Superior removed from the music cabinet and destroyed the Goldberg Variations—clearly capable of lifting subterranean complexities into the mind. Life in the convent returned to normal. The cook, to everyone's gratitude, stopped preparing the rancid,

goose-fat-laced beet soup of her youth and stuck to overcooked string beans, cabbage, potatoes. The floors stopped groaning and absorbed fresh wax. The doors ceased to fly open for no reason and closed discreetly. The water stopped rushing through the pipes as the sisters no longer took continual advantage of the new plumbing to drown out the sounds of their emotions.

And then one day Sister Cecellia woke with a tightness in her chest. Pain shot through her and the red lump in her rib cage beat like a wild thing caught in a snare of bones. Her throat shut. She wept. Her hands, drawn to the keyboard, floated into a long *apoggiatura*. Then, crash, she was inside a thrusting mazurka. The music came back to her. There was the scent of faint gardenias—his hothouse *boutonnière*. The silk of his heavy brown hair. His sensuous drawing-room sweat. His voice—she heard it—avid and light. It was as if the composer himself had entered the room. Who knows? Surely there was no more desperate, earthly, exacting heart than Cecellia's. Surely something, however paltry, lies beyond the grave.

At any rate, she played Chopin. Played him in utter naturalness until the Mother Superior was forced to shut the cover to the keyboard and gently pull the stool away. Cecellia lifted the lid and played upon her knees. The poor scandalized dame dragged her from the keys. Cecellia crawled back. The Mother, at her wit's end, sank down and urged the young woman to pray. She herself spoke first in fear and then in certainty, saying that it was the very Devil who had managed to find a way to Cecellia's soul through the flashing doors of sixteenth notes. Her fears were confirmed when, not moments later, the gentle sister raised her arms and fists and struck the keys as though the instrument were stone and from the rock her thirst would be quenched. But only discord emerged.

"My child, my dear child," the Mother comforted, "come away and rest yourself."

The younger nun, breathing deeply, refused. Her severe gray eyes were rimmed in a smoky red. Her lips bled purple. She was in torment. "There is no rest," she declared. She unpinning her veil and studiously dismantled her habit,

folding each piece with reverence and setting it upon the piano bench. The Mother remonstrated with Cecellia in the most tender and compassionate tones. However, just as in the depth of her playing the virgin had become the woman, so now the woman in the habit became a woman to the bone. She stripped down to her shift, but no further.

"He wouldn't want me to go out unprotected," she told her Mother Superior.

"God?" the older woman asked, bewildered.

"Chopin," Cecellia answered.

Kissing her dear Mother's trembling fingers, Cecellia knelt. She made a true genuflection, murmured an act of contrition, and then walked away from the convent made of bricks with the secret word pressed between yellow mortar, and from the music, her music, which the Mother Superior would from then on keep under lock and key.

SO it was Sister Cecellia, or Agnes DeWitt of rural Wisconsin, who appeared before Berndt Vogel in the cavern of the barn and said in her mother's dialect, for she knew a Ger-

man when she met one, that she was hungry. She wanted to ask whether he had a piano, but it was clear to her that he wouldn't and at any rate she was exhausted.

"Jetzt muss ich schlafen," she said after eating half a plate of scalded oatmeal with new milk.

So he took her to his bed, the only bed there was, in the corner of the otherwise empty room. He went out to the barn he loved, covered himself with hay, and lay awake all night listening to the rustling of mice and sensing the soundless predatory glide of the barn owls and the stiff erratic flutter of bats. By morning, he had determined to marry her if she would have him, just so that he could unpin and then unwind the long strip of cloth that bound her torso. She refused his offer, but she did speak to him of who she was and where from, and in that first summary she gave of her life she concluded that she must never marry again, for not only had she wed herself soul to soul to Christ, but she had already been unfaithful—with her phantom lover, the Polish composer. She had already lived out too grievous

a destiny to become a bride again. By explaining this to Berndt, however, she had merely moved her first pawn in a long game of words and gestures that the two would play over the course of many months. What she didn't know was that she had opened to a dogged and ruthless opponent.

Berndt Vogel's passion engaged him, mind and heart. He prepared himself. Having dragged Army caissons through hip-deep mud after the horses died in torment, having seen his best friend suddenly uncreated into a mass of shrieking pulp, having lived intimately with pouring tumults of eager lice and rats plump with a horrifying food, he was rudimentarily prepared for the suffering he would experience in love. She, however, had also learned her share of discipline. Moreover—for the heart of her gender is stretched, pounded, molded, and tempered for its hot task from birth—she was a woman.

The two struck a temporary bargain, and set up housekeeping. She still slept in the indoor bed. He stayed in the barn. A month passed. Three. Six. Each morning she lit the stove and cooked, then heated water in a big tank for laundry and swept the cool linoleum floors. Monday she sewed. She baked all day Tuesday. On Wednesdays she churned and scrubbed. She sold the butter and the eggs Thursdays. Killed a chicken every Friday. Saturdays she walked into town and practiced the piano in the school basement. Sunday she played the organ for Mass and then at the close of the day started the next week's work. Berndt paid her. At first she spent her salary on clothing. When with her earnings she had acquired shoes, stockings, a full set of cotton underclothing and then a woollen one, too, and material for two housedresses—one patterned with twisted leaves and tiny blue berries, and the other of an ivy lattice print—and a sweater and, at last, a winter coat, after she had earned a blanket, quilted overalls, a pair of boots, she decided on a piano.

This is where Berndt thought he could maneuver her into marriage, but she proved too cunning for him. It was early in the evening and the yard was pleasant with the sound of grasshoppers. The two sat on the porch drinking glasses of sugared lemon water. Every so often, in the ancient six-foot grasses



"True, I can't take it with me, but I can take the access codes to it."

that survived at the margin of the yard, a firefly signalled or a dove cried out its five hollow notes.

They drank slowly, she in her sprigged-berry dress that skimmed her waist. He noted with disappointment that she wore normal underclothing now, had stopped binding her breasts. Perhaps, he thought, he could persuade her to resume her old ways, at least occasionally, just for him. It was a wan hope. She looked so comfortable, so free. She'd taken on a little weight and lost her anemic pallor. Her arms were brown, muscular. In the sun, her straight fine hair glinted with green-gold sparks of light and her eyes were deceptively clear.

"I can teach music," she told him. She had decided that her suggestion must sound merely practical, a money-making ploy. She did not express any pleasure or zeal, though at the very thought each separate tiny muscle in her hands ached. "It would be a way of bringing in some money."

He was left to absorb this. He might have believed her casual proposition, except that her restless fingers gave her away, and he noted their insistent motions. She was playing the Adagio of the "Pathétique" on the tablecloth, a childhood piece that nervously possessed her from time to time.

"You would need a piano," he told her. She nodded and held his gaze in that aloof and unbearably sexual way that had first skewered him.

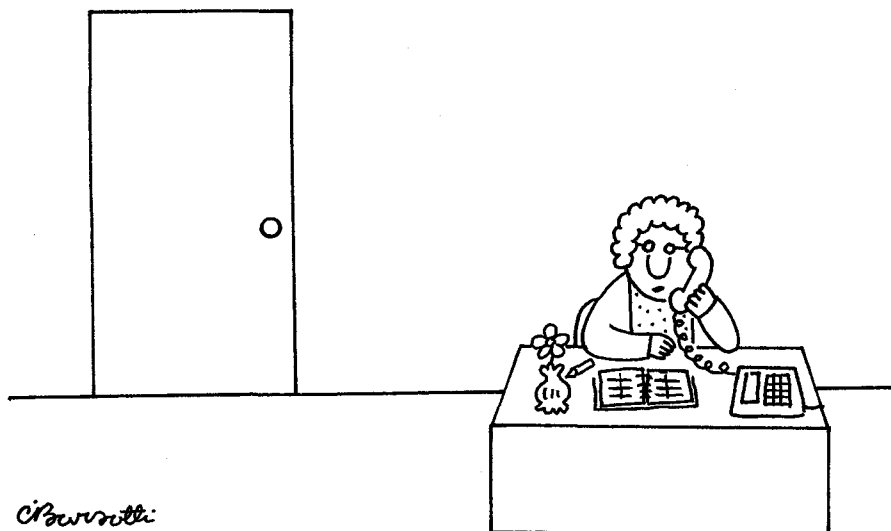
"It's the sort of thing a husband gives his wife," he dared.

Her fingers stopped moving. She cast down her eyes in contempt.

"I can use the school instrument. I've spoken to the school principal already."

Berndt looked at the moon-shaped bone of her ankle, at her foot in the brown, thick-heeled shoe she'd bought. He ached to hold her foot in his lap, untie her oxford shoe with his teeth, cover her calf with kisses, and breathe against the delicate folds of berry cloth.

He offered marriage once again. His heart. His troth. His farm. She spurned the lot. She would simply walk into town. He let her know that he would like to buy the piano, it wasn't that, but there was not a store for many miles where it could be purchased. She knew better and with exasperated heat de-



"Would you like a little phone sex while you hold?"

scribed the way that she would, if he would help financially, go about locating and then acquiring the best piano for the best price. She vowed that she would purchase the instrument not in Fargo but in Minneapolis. From there, she could have it hauled for less than the freight markup. She would make her arrangements in one day and return by night in order not to spend one extra dime either on food she couldn't carry or on a hotel room. When he resisted to the last, she told him that she was leaving. She would find a small room in town and there she would acquire students, give lessons.

She betrayed her desperation. Some clench of her fingers gave her away, and it was as much Berndt's unconfused love of her and wish that she might be happy as any worry she might leave him that finally caused him to agree. In the six months that he'd known Agnes DeWitt she had become someone to reckon with, and even he, who understood desperation and self-denial, was finding her proximity most difficult. He worked himself into exhaustion, and his farm prospered. Sleeping in the barn was difficult, but he had set into one wall a bunk room for himself and his hired man and installed a stove that burned red hot on cold nights; only, sometimes, as he looked sleepily into the glowering flanks of iron, he could not keep his own fingers from moving along the rough mattress in

faint imitation of the way he would, if he ever could, touch her hips. He, too, was practicing.

THE piano moved across the August desert of drought-sucked wheat like a shield, a dark upended black thing, an ebony locust. Agnes made friends with a hauler out of Morris and he gave her a slow-wagon price. Both were to accompany into Fargo the last grand piano made by Caramacchione. It had been shipped to Minneapolis, unsold until Agnes entered with her bean sock of money. She accompanied the instrument back to the farm during the dog days. Hot weather was beloved by this particular piano. It tuned itself on muggy days. And so, as it moved across the flat expanse, Miss Agnes DeWitt mounted the back of the wagon and played to the clouds.

They had to remove one side of the house to get the piano into the front room, and it took six strong men a full day to do the job. By the time the instrument was settled into place by the window, Berndt was persuaded of its necessary presence, and proud. He sent the men away, although the side of the house was still open to the swirling light of stars. Dark breezes moved the curtains; he asked her to play for him. She did, the music gripped her, and she did not, could not, stop.

Late that night she turned from the last chord of the simple Nocturne in

C Minor into the silence of Berndt's listening presence. Three slow claps from his large hands died in the waiting quiet. His eyes rested upon her and she returned his gaze with a long and mysterious stare of gentle regard. The side of the house admitted a great swath of moonlight. Spiders built their webs of phosphorescence across black space. Berndt ticked through what he knew—she would not marry him because she had been married and unfaithful, in her mind at least. He was desperate not to throw her off, repel her, damage the mood set by the boom of nighthawks flying in, swooping out, by the rustle of black oak and willow, by the scent of the blasted petals of summer's last wild roses. His courage was at its lowest ebb. Fraught with sheer need and emotion he stood before Agnes, finally, and asked in a low voice, "*Schlaf mit mir. Bitte. Schlaf mit mir.*"

Agnes looked into his face, openly at last, showing him the great weight of feeling she carried. As she had for her Mother Superior, she removed her clothing carefully and folded it, only she did not stop undressing at her shift but continued until she had slipped off her large tissuey bloomers and seated herself naked at the piano. Her body was a pale blush of silver, and her

hands, when they began to move, rose and fell with the simplicity of water.

It became clear to Berndt Vogel, as the music slowly wrapped around him, that he was engaged in something that he would have had to pay a whore in Fargo—if there really were any whores in Fargo—a great sum to perform. A snake of hair wound down her spine. Her pale buttocks seemed to float off the invisible bench. Her legs moved like a swimmer's, and he thought he heard her moan. He watched her fingers spin like white shadows across the keys, and found that his body was responding as though he lay fully twined with her underneath a quilt of music and stars. His breath came short, shorter, rasping and ragged. Beyond control, he gasped painfully and gave himself into some furtive cleft of halftones and anger that opened beneath the ice of high keys.

Shocked, weak and wet, Berndt rose and slipped through the open side wall. He trod aimless crop lines until he could allow himself to collapse in the low fervor of night wheat. It was true, wasn't it, that the heart was a lying cheat? And as the songs Chopin invented were as much him as his body, so it followed that Berndt had just watched the woman he loved make love to a dead man. Now, as he listened

to the music, he thought of returning. Imagined the meal of her white shoulders. Shut his eyes and entered the confounding depth between her legs.

THEN followed their best years. Together, they constructed a good life in which the erotic merged into the daily so that every task and even small kindness was charged with a sexual humor. Some mornings the two staggered from the bedroom disoriented, still half drunk on the unlikely eagerness of the other's body. These frenzied periods occurred every so often, like spells in the weather. They would be drawn, sink, disappear into their greed, until the cow groaned for milking or the hired man swore and banged on the outside gate. If nothing else intervened, they'd stop from sheer exhaustion. Then they would look at one another oddly, questioningly, as if the other person were a complete stranger, and gradually resume their normal interaction, which was off-hand and distracted, but upheld by the assurance of people who thought alike.

Agnes gave music lessons, and although the two weren't married, even the Catholics and the children came to her. This was because it was well-known that Miss DeWitt's first commitment had been to Christ. It was understandable that she would have no other marriage. Although she did not take the Holy Eucharist on her tongue, she was there at church each Sunday morning, faithful and devout, to play the organ. There, she, of course, played Bach, with a purity of intent purged of any subterranean feeling, strictly, and for God.

SO when the river began to rise one spring, Berndt had already gone where life was deepest many times, and he did not particularly fear the rain. But what began as a sheer mist became an even sprinkle and then developed into a slow, pounding shower that lasted three days, then four, then on the fifth day, when it should have tapered off, increased.

The river boiled along swiftly, a gray soup still contained, just barely, within its high banks. On day six the rain



"Would you mind?"

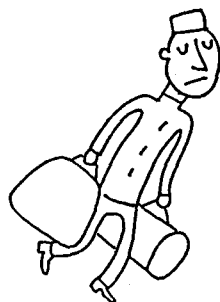
stopped, or seemed to. The storm had moved upstream. All day while the sun shone pleasantly the river heaved itself up, tore into its flow new trees and boulders, created tip-ups, washouts, areas of singing turbulence, and crawled, like an infant, toward the farm. Berndt rushed around uneasily, pitching hay into the high loft, throwing chickens up after the hay, wishing he could throw the horse up as well, and the house, and—because Agnes wrung her hands—the piano. But the piano was earth-anchored and well-tuned by the rainy air, so, instead of worrying, Agnes practiced.

Once the river started to move, it gained confidence. It had no problem with fences or gates, wispy windbreaks, ditches. It simply levelled or attained the level of whatever stood in its path. Water jumped up the lawn and collected behind the sacks of sand that Berndt had desperately filled and laid. The river tugged itself up the porch and into the house from one side. From the other side it undermined an already weak foundation that had temporarily shored up the same wall once removed to make way for the piano. The river tore against the house and then, like a child tipping out a piece of candy from a box, it surged underneath and rocked the floor, and the piano crashed through the weakened wall.

It landed in the swift current of the yard, Agnes with it. Berndt saw only the white treble clef of her dress as she spun away, clutching the curved lid. It bobbed along the flower beds first, and then, as muscular new eddies caught it, touched down on the shifting lanes of Berndt's wheat fields, and farther, until the revolving instrument and the woman on it reached the original river and plunged in. They were carried not more than a hundred feet before the piano lost momentum and sank. As it went down, Agnes thought at first of crawling into its box, nestling for safety among the cold, dead strings. But, as she struggled with the hinged cover, she lost her grip and was swept north. She should have drowned, but there was a snag of rope, a tree, two men in a fishing skiff risking themselves to save a valuable birding dog. They pulled Agnes out and dumped her in the bottom of the boat, impatient to get the

dog. She gagged, coughed, and passed out in a roil of feet and fishing tackle.

When she came to, she was back in the convent, which was on high ground and open to care for victims of the flood. Berndt was not among the rescued. When the river went down and the heat rose, he was found snagged in a tip-up of roots, tethered to his great blue steaming horse. As Agnes recovered her strength, did she dream of him? Think of him entering her and her receiving him? Long for the curve of his hand on her breast? Yes and no. She thought again of music. Chopin. Berndt. Chopin.



He had written a will, in which he declared her his common-law wife and left to her the farm and all upon it. There, she raised Rosecomb Bantams, Dominikers, Reds. She bought another piano and played with an isolated intensity that absorbed her spirit.

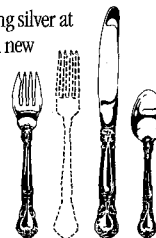
A year or so after Berndt's death, her students noticed that she would stop in the middle of a lesson and smile out the window as though welcoming a long-expected visitor. One day the neighbor children went to pick up the usual order of eggs and were most struck to see the white-and-black-flecked Dominikers flapping up in alarm around Miss DeWitt as she stood magnificent upon the green grass.

Tall, slender, legs slightly bowed, breasts jutting a bit to either side, and the flare of hair flicking up the center of her—naked. She looked at the children with remote kindness. Asked, "How many dozen?" Walked off to gather the eggs.

That episode made the gossip-table rounds. People put it off to Berndt's death and a relapse of nerves. She lost only a Lutheran student or two. She continued playing the organ for Mass, and at home, in the black, black nights, Chopin. And if she was asked, by an innocent pupil too young to understand the meaning of discretion, why she sometimes didn't wear clothes, Miss DeWitt would answer that she removed her clothing when she played the music of a particular bare-souled composer. She would nod meditatively and say in her firmest manner that when one enters into such music, one should be naked. And then she would touch the keys. ♦

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TRUE LIVES

Preserving the art of writing about the dead.

BY ANTHONY LANE

WHEN Antony died, Cleopatra was nice enough to claim that there was "nothing left remarkable beneath the visiting moon." She also pointed out that "the soldier's pole is fall'n." As a tribute, it all sounds magnificent; as an obituary, however, it's a non-starter. We get the point that Antony was something special, but when was he born? Which school did he attend? At what stage did the pole begin to rise? Cleopatra, always a quick learner, could use some lessons from the obituarists of the *New York Times*. Compare her soaring style with this tough and rooted approach:

Helen Bunce, who knitted so many mittens she didn't know what to do unless she was knitting more mittens, died at a nursing home in Watertown, New York, where she was known as the Mitten Lady. She was eighty-six and had been knitting mittens until a few days before her death.

There you go: crisp, compact, and free of moons, visiting or resident, yet not without its share of peculiar and woollen atmosphere. Helen Bunce is one of the blessed souls who appear in "The Last Word: *The New York Times* Book of Obituaries and Farewells—A Celebration of Unusual Lives" (William Morrow; \$25), which is a hell of a mouthful for such a simple idea. This weighty and enlightening volume, edited by Marvin Siegel, is nectar to those of us who consider the obituary to be not merely an art form but one of the few art forms that have remained coherent enough to demand any measure of obedience. Novelists can do more or less what they fancy to linear narrative without getting arrested, and no one turns a hair when Oliver Stone switches film stock every three seconds, but an obituarist who bends the rules does so at his peril: beware the ravaging dead who rise from their graves, or, even

worse, the vengeful blue of the editor's pencil. The fact that the obituary is unquestionably a minor form only strengthens one's desire both to take care of it and never to take it too seriously. It should be swiftly skimmed, or even left unread, with the sort of comfortable inattention that Victorian readers used to bring to light verse. Even someone who never studies the obituaries would feel cheated if they were to vanish from newspapers altogether.

The principles that govern the true obituary are as stringent (and therefore as likely to provoke silliness) as the metrical demands of a haiku. First, you must state the facts of the death; they need not be bald facts, nor should they be hairy with surplus detail or supposition. Thus, from the *Times* of September 20, 1995:

Orville Redenbacher, the agricultural visionary who all but single-handedly revolutionized the American popcorn industry, died in his home in Coronado, California. He was found in a bathtub with a whirlpool in his condominium, where he drowned after a heart attack, the medical examiner's office said. He was eighty-eight.

By this time, seasoned obituary addicts will be wide awake and licking their lips. There is so much to savor in that opening paragraph alone: the pleasing thought that yet another great inventor was named Orville; the sick little chime of "Coronado" and "heart attack," which would not have disgraced the diary of Humbert Humbert; the promise of tussles, or even heartbreak, contained within the phrase "all but single-handedly"; and, last, the illogical but nagging connection between popcorn and whirlpool, which somehow suggests that this most useful of lives had reached its finale in a whirring, but-tery blur.

Next, we backtrack to the high point—in this case, to 1965, when Mr.

Redenbacher and a partner "came up with the first significant genetic improvement in popcorn in more than five thousand years." I'd love to have seen the obituarist trying to nail that one—combing the daubs on the walls of prehistoric caves in search of dim white fluff. The story then proceeds swiftly to the present day, only to halt and return once more, this time to the very beginning; not until we are two-thirds of the way through the obituary, for instance, do we learn that Redenbacher was born in Brazil, Indiana. After a quick spin through the family from which he sprang, we are led, with delicate symmetry, to the relatives from whom he has recently departed in peace. This can take up considerable space: there is barely a soul in the *Times* book who doesn't seem to leave behind a restless herd of grandchildren. America emerges from its pages as the most elastic, inventive, laudatory, and, let us say, semi-national nation on earth.

To unpack an obituary like Orville Redenbacher's makes it sound choppy and shapeless; in fact, a good obituary will flow and accelerate as smartly as a sonata, or a movie. Anyone raised on the restive chronology of "Citizen Kane" will warm to the natural complexities of the form; if anything, it draws us closer to the imbalances of life, to the rise and fall of all our fortunes, than does the stern procedural plod of the full-length biography. The obituary likes to hint and nudge where the latter grandly expounds, and the demands of suggestive concision mean that obituarists bereft of wit are not worth reading at all. As professional journalists, they are spared the mournfulness of elegy, and eulogy, too, lies beyond their brief; instead of lifting up our eyes unto the hills, they induce the steady, semi-amused gaze into the middle distance.

IT was not until the late eighties that I became fully conscious of the rich, wicked talents of obituarists. I was working on a British daily newspaper and came to treasure the Monday-morning conferences at which the editor would quiz the heads of departments about their plans for the week. These were sullen and coffee-stained affairs, dreaded by hacks who were slightly put out at having to think aloud before noon, but there was invari-

GERALD SCARFE



An obituarist who bends the rules does so at his peril: beware the dead who rise from their graves or a vengeful editor's pencil.

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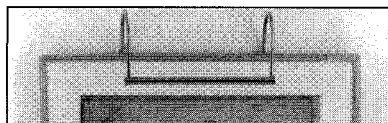
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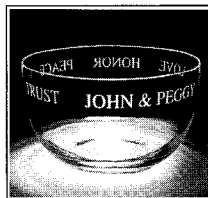
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ably a final twist. The editor would start: "Home news?"

"Um, we've got new attacks on Tory spending plans. There's a rail strike set for Friday. And the I.R.A. trial could possibly reach a verdict by the weekend."

"Good. Foreign?"

"Main story is Gorbachev hosting the summit. Official recognition of the African famine by the U.N.; we should have someone there by tomorrow. And far-right groups claiming a big turnout in the German elections."

"Fine. Sport?"

"Well, it's the second week of Wimbledon, so obviously all the British players are out. And the cricket's rained off. We may have to lead on yachting."

"Pity. Anyone else? Obituaries?"

A brief pause.

"Well, the bad news is that Mother Teresa's getting better."

"What? But you said..."

"I know, I did promise, but last week her cold really *was* getting worse, and I thought I could have her for you by Thursday. Sorry about that. Couple of good comas, though..."

It is hardly surprising that the obituary, like the stubborn and time-wasting crossword, should have attained its singular place in British newspapers. You can tell just how securely it is ensconced in the national consciousness from all the crumbling apocrypha in which it has been enfolded. There is the instructive tale of the man who liked to begin his day by turning to the obituaries columns of the *London Times*; only when he had satisfied himself that his name was not featured there would he proceed with the rest of his day. There is even a Wildean sequel to that story—the occasion on which, thanks to a printer's confusion of names, a certain British peer really did open the newspaper and find himself confronted by his own obituary. In a rage of curiosity, he rang the obituaries editor and announced defiantly who he was. Without hesitation, the editor replied, "And where are you speaking from now, Your Lordship?" Or so the story goes.

This blend of absent-mindedness and snobbery—not quite cruel, but certainly suspicious of excess warmth—could not have emerged from any country other than England. The estimable writers who contributed to "The Last Word" would, quite rightly, be wary of

the tone that is set by some of their counterparts in London. Not for a moment would one suggest that English obituarists find themselves suppressing a laugh as the funeral procession passes; it would be fair to say, nevertheless, that they can hardly wait to get back to the pub and start mulling over the inhabitant of the coffin.

The clear leader in the field is the London *Daily Telegraph*, which in recent years has raised its obituaries page to such a pitch of eminence that one finds oneself ruffling briskly past the news pages in order to reach the real news of other people's demise. To be brutal about it, cold bodies are hot stuff, and yet to crave this regular fix is in no way a morbid preoccupation. The *Telegraph*, unlike most other newspapers, rarely provides the cause of death; when it does, the motive tends to be comic, as in the case of the sixties chanteuse Nico, purveyor of what the obituarist calls "depraved Germanic lullabies," who passed away in 1988. "In recent years," we are told, Nico "gave up heroin for bicycling, which was to turn out the more dangerous amusement—she died when she fell off a bicycle while on holiday." If you find such druggy tragedy to be no laughing matter, then the *Telegraph* is not for you; if, on the other hand, you like the sound of a courageous, cockeyed universe that was plainly invented by a feather-brained Supreme Being who mislaid the instruction manual, and is crammed with men and women of indomitable oddity, you should seek out the three books of *Telegraph* obituaries. These were collected and edited by Hugh Massingberd, who was the newspaper's obituaries editor from 1986 to 1994, and were published by Macmillan: the first, "A Celebration of Eccentric Lives," in 1995; the second, "Heroes and Adventurers," the following year; and the third, "Entertainers," in 1997. A fourth volume, with the enticing subtitle of "Rogues," is on the way.

Though the majority of the entries concern dead Brits, quite a few distinguished Americans—among them Liberace, Divine, and Jimmy Carter's brother—do make the cut, and there is a heartfelt tribute to the Toronto-born Beatrice Lillie:

She had a reputation as a prankster and in 1951 ordered a live alligator from Har-

rods and sent it to Noël Coward with the message: "So what else is new?"

Nothing funnier or more stirring than these volumes has arrived in print for some time. The comedy is of an intricate variety, starting with the established rhetoric of euphemism: when an obituarist ends an article with the words "He never married" or "She was unmarried," this is and always has been acceptable shorthand for homosexuality, or occasionally—and this can be confusing—for a heterosexuality so all-embracing that the person concerned was physically unable to make it to the altar. The paper's obituaries have two further distinguishing features. First, unlike those in "The Last Word," or those in some other British newspapers, they are always unsigned, leaving the reader to ruminate on the exact relationship between writer and subject. Second, they are aided by a sub-heading, which runs beneath the name of the deceased and is intended to sum up the principal landmarks of the life, as a taster for what follows. The New York *Times* has these, too, but somehow in England the results are more reliably surreal, either through majestic anachronism ("Colonial officer who, armed only with a walking-stick, quelled seething mobs in northern Nigeria") or through hideous juxtaposition: "Fervent supporter of capital punishment who detested dogs." He sounds nice.

If you had to make a distinction between "The Last Word" and its English equivalents, you might say that the American volume specializes in makers, whereas the *Telegraph* collections focus on doers—or, occasionally, on those who did absolutely nothing of any worth but did it with such verve and application that their very indolence makes for exhausting reading. The fine, sustained middle section of "The Last Word" includes the developer of artificial sweetener, the Belgian-born genius behind the classic Corvette, the best diamond-cutter in the world, and the man responsible for the zoot suit, whereas in the *Telegraph* books you will find the sort of obituary that begins, "Denisa Lady Newborough, who has died aged 79, was many things: wire-walker, nightclub girl, nude dancer, air-pilot." Not, one feels instinctively, a useful life; but not exactly colorless, either.

Two pages later, it all ends on a master-stroke of historical bathos: "She is survived by her daughter Juno, who is married to a dentist." Lady Newborough was unorthodox but far from atypical of her generation. A quick skim through the first book will soon lead you to alight upon such figures as Sir Atholl Oakeley:

He started wrestling seriously after being beaten up by a gang of louts and built up his body by drinking eleven pints of milk a day for three years. This regimen had been recommended by the giant wrestler Hackenschmidt, who later told Oakeley that the quantity of milk prescribed had been a misprint.

Or Commander David Wemyss, scourge of submarines and connoisseur of siblings:

In 1924 he married Edith La Touche, the middle one of three sisters. When she died in 1930, he married her elder sister, Avice, and when she died in 1961 he married Lynette, the youngest, who had earlier been bridesmaid to her two elder sisters.

Or John Bindon, a celebrated London villain:

He was justly famed for a party trick which entailed the balancing of as many as six half-pint mugs on one part of his anatomy. . . . In 1982 he pleaded guilty to using a section of pavement as an offensive weapon against a "short and weedy" young man.

Or the fifth Duke of Portland:

The staff at Welbeck were instructed to pay him no attention, but to pass him by "as they would a tree." He liked to stay in his bedroom, communicating through a letter-box in the door. Each day he would be posted a roast fowl; His Grace would lunch off one half of the bird and dine off the other.

Or the happily named philologist John Allegro:

In a series of increasingly fantastical books he claimed that Christianity was a cryptic version of ancient sex-cults inspired by the hallucinogenic mushroom *Amanita muscaria* . . . and that most of [the Bible's] leading characters, including Moses, David, and Jesus, are in fact walking mushrooms.

To which the obituarist adds, "Such theories did not find favour with the academic establishment." As a crowning gag, that is unimprovable: quiet as smoke, and so vastly amused by the histrionics of others that its only option is to take the opposing tone—the starched and undemonstrative—and push it to extremes.

When it comes to the second volume, "Heroes and Adventurers," such

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reticence goes beyond politesse, and acquires the flavor of lethal understatement. In an account of Lieutenant-Colonel Charles (The Boss) Tripp, whom the obituarist hails with disarming simplicity as "an altogether exceptional man," there is a passing reference to an encounter between Japanese forces and the 1st Commando Fiji Guerrillas, led by Tripp: "The ensuing conflict included numerous close-quarter fights at night. It was described as 'very personal.'" Tripp was later to call his guerrilla work "the best three years' holiday I ever had, and I got paid for it too." This makes him sound like the bluffest of Englishmen; the chastening fact is that he was a New Zealander. (Australasia also provided the Allies with some of their most skillful airmen; Sir Harold "Mickey" Martin, the acknowledged king of low-flying, once snagged his wing on a German balloon cable, which he eventually cleared "by diving to fifty feet and getting it caught in a tree." And we moan about the traffic.)

There is a simple reason for the presence of these steel-nerved types. Having been born in the first quarter of the century, and having spent many years skirting the Grim Reaper and leaving him thunderstruck and scytheless in their wake, they are finally going to their eternal rest. There are few remaining veterans of the First World War, who are mostly centenarians, and even the stock of those who saw active—and, in many cases, hyperactive—service in the Second is beginning to dwindle. Once it is exhausted, there will be no replenishment, and one shudders to think of those colossi who will bestride an updated "Heroes and Adventurers" in fifty years' time, after leading lives of barely interrupted peace: bungee-jumpers, stuntmen, rap artists, bank tellers who rescued mongrels from storm drains. In short, this is your last chance. Never again will you be introduced to "a well-dined major-general trying to light his cigar with a geranium," or to Keith Elliott, who, with a handful of men, "captured and destroyed five machine-guns, one anti-tank gun, killed a great number of the enemy, and captured 130 prisoners" in the North African desert, and who was ordained an Anglican priest five years later. Here, too, honor is

justly paid to Xan Fielding—traveler, writer, fighter, and stalwart of S.O.E., or Special Operations Executive, which ran high-risk undercover missions in the Second World War. (Its American counterpart was the Office of Strategic Services.) In the helpful words of his *Telegraph* obituarist, "Fielding was the sort of man one would be happy to go into the jungle with":

When Crete fell, Fielding was interviewed in Egypt by SOE. He was asked: "Have you any personal objection to committing a murder?" His response being deemed acceptable, Fielding was put ashore in Crete with a load of weapons and explosives by Cdr "Crap" Miers, VC, skipper of the submarine *Torbay*.

Fielding, who had adopted the style and dress of a Greek highland peasant, was accompanied by a First World War veteran, who was inseparable from his solar topee and unrecognisable as the village schoolmaster he was supposed to impersonate.

What needs to be remembered about such an incident is that if the occupying German troops had seen through the veteran's unconvincing disguise they would have arrested both men as British spies, interrogated them, and most probably shot them. That underlay of seriousness, not to mention the larger strategic contribution of special forces in the Mediterranean, in no way contradicts the breezy near-farce of the telling; if anything, the two are intricately twinned, suggesting that the imminent prospect of losing one's life is, among other things, a matchless education in the art of treating it lightly. It is no insult to the dead, therefore, if we come to find this litany of courage not just inspiring but entertaining. The obvious (and socially sustaining) moral to be drawn from the second *Telegraph* book is that, having absorbed the sacrifices made by previous and better generations, we should lend fresh thought to our own existence and value it more; but we are also left with the sneakier feeling that to value it less—preferably while wearing a false mustache—is a more binding guarantee of good fun.

All of which makes me wonder about the pupils who studied French in the late nineteen-seventies at a rowdy London school. Could they possibly have guessed that Harry Rée, the sixty-five-year-old gentleman

who was manfully attempting to teach them the future perfect, had a past as pluperfect as this?

Eventually rumbled, Rée hit the German military policeman sent to arrest him over the head with a bottle of Armagnac, but was shot in the process: one bullet penetrated a lung, another grazed his heart. After a twenty-minute struggle during which he bit off the German's nose, Rée escaped. He managed to cross a river and crawl several miles through the countryside to the Swiss border.

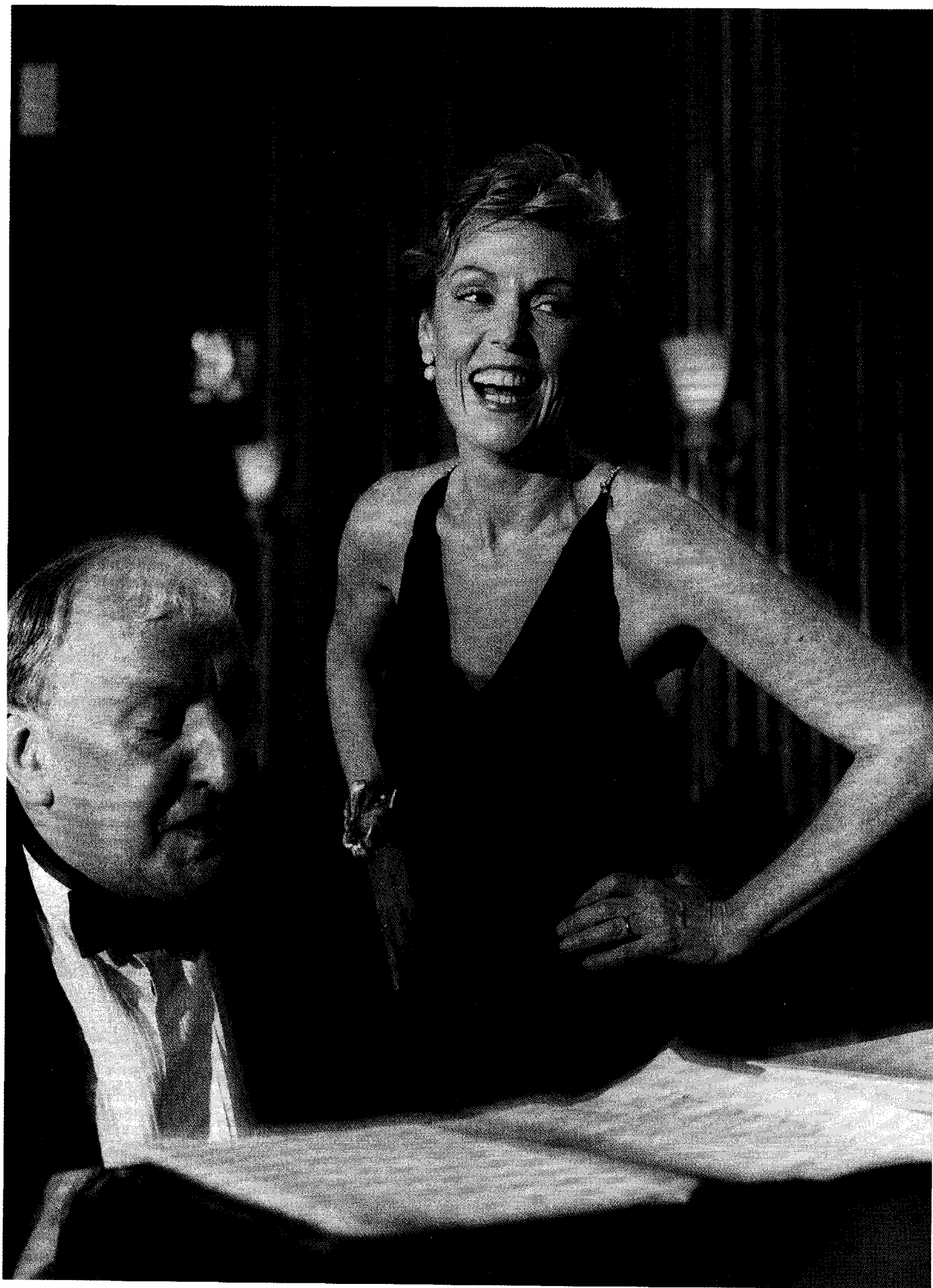
There is something comic about great lives, but the comedy does not diminish them; on the contrary, we are the ones who feel small. Our age is so resolutely unheroic, and the employment opportunities for registered demigods are now so scarce, that all we can do, in our enfeebled state, is laugh with envy and disbelief at the memory of those who still had the wit and the wherewithal to live large.

THERE are two objections to the view of the world that is offered by obituaries. The first accusation, which can be levelled not at "The Last Word" but at the three *Telegraph* books, is that they represent political incorrect-

ON A CLEERE DAY

There's something about Mary Cleere Haran. The stylish chanteuse—whose recent album, "Pennies from Heaven," is a collection of movie music from the thirties—refuses to reduce cabaret to taxidermy. With a historian's flair for arcana and a standup comic's timing, she makes the past as lively as anything in pop music today. She also sings brilliantly. This fall, Haran and her recently knighted pianist, Sir Richard Rodney Bennett, return to the Algonquin Hotel's venerable Oak Room, with two new programs: Gershwin on Broadway and Gershwin in Hollywood—just in time for the composer's centennial. Haran has devoted considerable time to such larger-than-life New York legends as James Cagney and Lorenz Hart, so her interest in Gershwin is hardly surprising. "I like hyper people," she says. "Gershwin never stopped. I think the guy had an attention-deficit disorder."

Photograph by Marc Hom



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ness gone wild—that they perpetuate such an outlandish and dog-eared imperialism that, for all the incidental delight they provide, the joke is very much on them. Running down the roster of disreputable peers and double-barrelled wastrels, I find it hard to formulate a response to this charge. There is also the long list of men who were seldom, if ever, addressed by their full names, preferring to be called Crap, Rasher, Biffy, Brookie, Dixie, Braces, Weary, Stuffy, Buster, Boney, Blinker, and the unambiguous Monocle. What is it that draws us toward them but one-eyed nostalgia? Why, especially, should readers here feel any fondness for these leathery chaps who fought and played long ago in the name of another nation? The answer can only be that any closed world has its fascinations; the more defining its rhetoric, and the more subtly codified its conduct, the better.

If the English can lap up Damon Runyon, then Americans should be suckers for Braces and Rasher.

The other and more incisive complaint levelled against obituaries is that they shrink our experience in the world to a smallness that is close to insulting. When we read, at the end of an obituary, "He was twice a widower, and had no children," we are getting a monstrously distilled version of what most of us, nowadays, would call life. What was the quality of distress that was visited upon the childless couple, or did they fulfill a plan to stay free? We take it for granted that our links with loved ones, and the severing of them, will clutter up our existence and lend it weight, and that our friends, if they talk about us, will talk of little else; so how can an obituary that harps on a few years (sometimes a few *minutes*) of unrepresentative violence be

considered the adequate record of a character, let alone of a self?

Well, I suspect that a surprising number of readers will sigh with relief at having discovered that gemlike rarity: the Book Without Relationships. Most current publications, fiction or otherwise, involve nothing *but* relationships, so it is a pleasure to move from that warm emotional bath to the cold plunge of friendship circa 1918, and a certain Billy Stawell: "He met a sportsman by the name of Wingfield who convinced him that any animal, even a bird, was rideable if it was large enough." Stawell subsequently, though briefly, mounted both a bull and an ostrich. Whether Mrs. Stawell ever learned of this is unclear. Equally, we can never know what Billy himself dreamed of on his deathbed. Even as the obituarists sharpened their quills, did he muse on his loving wife and son, or on the refulgent life to come? Or is it just possible that his mind wandered back through the life just gone, and decided that, all things considered, the ostrich ride he took with old "Birdy" Wingfield back in '18 was the happiest moment of them all?

In the final section of "The Waste Land," Eliot wrote of

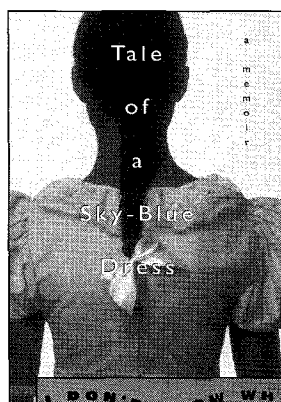
The awful daring of a moment's surrender
Which an age of prudence can never retract
By this, and this only, we have existed
Which is not to be found in our obituaries

Until recently, I always took this truth to be self-evident. Can an obituary, even one that is fully equipped with certifiable fact, be anything other than an assemblage of true lies? Now I'm not so sure. Studying the best obituaries, I get the sense that bursts of awful daring—many of them virtuous, some foolhardy, and all committed in the public eye, though with no eye on public relations—mark precisely those times at which a few fortunate souls most thoroughly and lucidly exist. Of course, there are ill-lit crimes and flushes of shame, not to mention slides into sexual release, that will always go unmentioned by the obituarists, who know their job too well to stray into such ungallant areas; but it is safe to say that a single selfless action—or, indeed, one ridiculous pratfall, or an epiphany born of popcorn—can fix and define a man as honestly as his most scalding love affair. I never had the pleasure, for instance, of meeting

(Advt.)

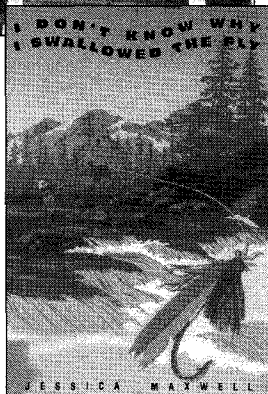
We truly live in a remarkable—if not necessarily a model—world, filled with wondrous things; a place where nature still possesses the power to awe, and where good can sometimes be born out of evil.

Thylia Moss' childhood was sharply divided into evil day and tender night, a situation this award-winning poet lyrically chronicles in her first prose work, *TALE OF A SKY-BLUE DRESS*.

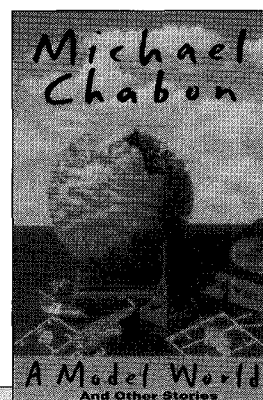


The beloved and doted-upon daughter of working-class parents, she suffered heartless abuse at the hands of the teenage babysitter entrusted with her care. Yet what could have been a grim catalog of horrors is, in fact, a hymn to the triumph of light over dark—a memoir that celebrates the author's courageous survival, and the eventual retrieval and redemption of her life.

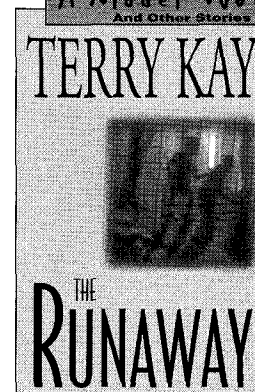
Author/angler **Jessica Maxwell** tangles her line in a great many of the exasperating dilemmas and soul-satisfying triumphs that are endemic to fly fishing and to life as well. Her book, *I DON'T KNOW WHY I SWALLOWED THE FLY*, is a witty, moving, and often profound personal exploration of the rich eddies of women in nature, the language of rivers, and the elusive state of grace Maxwell calls “quantum fishing.” Dedicated “fisherpersons” are not the only readers who will come away with something lasting from this unique appreciation of a singular sport.



Best known for his novels *The Mysteries of Pittsburgh* and *Wonder Boys*, **Michael Chabon** demonstrates his dexterity with the shorter fictional form in *A MODEL WORLD*—a collection of wry, sad, and whimsical stories about growing up and growing wise. From the ruminations of a has-been baseball pitcher forced to ponder his ruined career at the funeral of a teammate, to the hilarious desperation of a plagiarist graduate student facing his faculty advisor in a nasty, “bare-your-soul” parlor game, Chabon's graceful fiction takes many unexpected turns on its journeys across the rocky emotional terrain of exceptional lives.



Terry Kay's *THE RUNAWAY* is a story of murder and justice, a rich evocation of the post-World War Two rural South, and a novel that confronts serious issues of bigotry and humanity—of life and death—head-on. It centers on the discovery by two young boys of a corpse—the victim of a past racist homicide—which ultimately reveals long-hidden secrets and seething hatreds that rapidly and inexorably unravel the intricate fabric of a small Southern community.

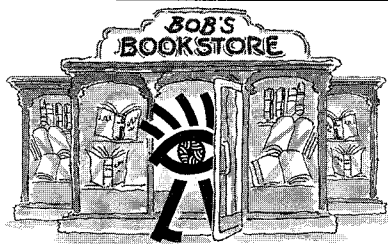


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the fourth Earl Russell, son of Bertrand Russell, but thanks to his obituary, from which I learned that he once rose to his feet in the House of Lords and confided to "startled" peers that Jimmy Carter and Leonid Brezhnev were one and the same person, I feel that I know

the innermost secrets of the man. Visitors to his home were proudly shown a pair of pants hanging from a nail. His Lordship explained that he had crocheted them from string, adding, "I didn't have a pattern. I had to keep trying them on." May he rest in peace. ♦

SOAP AND DEATH IN AMERICA

A novel about the dirty business of keeping America clean.

BY JOHN UPDIKE

OUR so-called age of information has bred an impulse to stuff a novel so full of data that it can hardly waddle. Joyce, Pynchon, and Gaddis have their youngish American heirs in William T. Vollmann, David Foster Wallace, and—at a higher level of refinement—Richard Powers. Powers, a polymath whose previous novel, "Galatea 2.2," brilliantly and, what's more, movingly imagined a computer, called Helen, whose artificial intelligence expanded into the realm of soul, will, and personality, has, in "Gain" (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; \$25), taken as his protagonist an American corporation named Clare.

The founder, the English merchant Jephthah Clare, comes to these shores in 1802, fleeing financial embarrassment in one of his own packet traders; he and his wife and three children make the journey on a cargo of Wedgwood china, which he sells upon arriving in Boston to set himself up as a trader. An inventive risk-taker, a devotee of the long and hazardous haul, he prospers until, in 1828, the Tariff of Abominations slashes trade. Only a certain English item, Pech's Soap, can be profitably imported, and the profit soon dissolves in "the flood of imitations." Rescue arrives in the form of a taciturn, recently widowed Irish candlemaker, Robert



Richard Powers

Emmet Ennis, whose superior product is noticed by Resolve Clare, one of Jephthah's three sons, and who converts his fatty skills to those of a soapmaker. The Clare sons—hard-headed Samuel, pious Resolve, and botany-minded Benjamin—become "J. Clare's Sons... Manufacturer & Wholesaler of All Imaginable Soaps and Candles / Unguent to Cleanse the Multitudes / Light to Lighten Them." Soap—its chemistry, its distribu-

tion, its packaging, its advertising, its growingly far-flung offshoots—becomes the stuff of our saga, generation after generation, boom after crash, triumph after crisis, Manifest Destiny after Civil War, innovation after innovation, detergents after soap flakes.

The details of doing business are generally left out of novels, even those involving businessmen—though Howells made a stab at it in "The Rise of Silas Lapham"—and Powers does a truly illuminating job of describing how a soap manufacturer exploits and endures the twists of our struggling democracy's economy to become a multinational chemical giant. The homeliness of the basic product and the slenderness of the advantage whereby one product wins out over another contrast with the increasing scope and complexity of financial operation. Powers scatters epigrammatic busi-

ness tips through his pages of exposition:

Progress demanded the destruction of much that had once been considered wealth. . . . The waters had constantly to leave behind the landscape they drained. . . . So, too, any forward-looking enterprise had to be ready to cast off what had once been its mainstay.

The real purpose of business . . . lay not in getting but in spending.

As always, a firm's worth lay in how many outstanding loans it could generate.

Money was the salt of human activity, its refrigeration. It retarded the spoilage of your day's efforts. . . . The history of humanity was the history of higher and higher orders of convertibility.

But is all this instruction, this entertaining illustration of basic principles, fiction enough? What does the effort of inventing Clare do that could not be done by a shrewd and animated history of a real corporation like—all mentioned in the text—Procter & Gamble, Lever Brothers, Squibb, or Colgate?

Soap is only half of "Gain"; the other half concerns Laura Rowen Bodey, the forty-two-year-old mother of a daughter, Ellen, and a son, Tim, with a divorced ex-husband, Don, a married lover, Ken, and a job at a realty firm, New Millennium. She lives in Lacewood, a prosperous Illinois city (pop. 92,400) a hundred and fifty miles south of Chicago, which for more than a century has been home to Clare's national headquarters. We meet Laura as she attends the funeral of her daughter's best friend, who mysteriously wasted away at the age of twelve. Soon Laura herself is told that she has ovarian cancer. Lacewood seems to be a cancer-prone town. Near Clare headquarters is a landscaped pond that somehow never freezes. Clare has branched out from soap into all sorts of chemical marvels—detergents, fertilizers, pesticides. Uh-oh.

The progress of Laura's illness, detailed with the same avid factuality as the chemistry of soap, is on a collision course with the progress of Clare International; the two histories are set forth in alternating brief chapters interspersed with telling scraps of advertising and promotional matter clipped from the two centuries since 1802. Oddly, the collision—a lawsuit—when it comes, after three hundred pages of meticulous data distribution, is muffled to the point of a nonevent. Laura looks

around her house and finds Clare products everywhere:

Who told them to make all these things? But she knows the answer to that one. . . . Wasn't she born wanting what they were born wanting to give her? Every thought, every pleasure, freed up by these little simplicities, the most obvious of them already worlds beyond her competence.

Laura and the author seem inclined to the view that life, and not Clare, is the villain. "No punishment bigger than living," she thinks toward the end. Her resignation from life is less moving than that of Helen the computer, whom we saw labor to acquire consciousness, connection by connection. We like Laura, but her world feels a bit sitcomish, furnished with standard fixtures. Her relationship with her growing daughter interests her, and the reader, the most. Don's stubborn loyalty irritates her, and Ken is hardly even a cipher. Powers' characters have love lives rather incidentally; no intimate urgency warms the carefully observed details they move through. Laura's descent, like Clare's rise, is sheer process—a study in chemistry. This intricately, intelligently, and accurately constructed fictional mechanism yet lacks the spark that would make it go on its own. The author, off above the clouds with his omniscience, is unignorably present in every high-tech touch, every shift of narrative gears, every typographical oddity. The rapid fluctuation between Laura's medical weepie and the saga of American industry, with antic commercial breaks in between, makes it hard to get close to any character. We never quite dwell among these people; we just collect a few pages of evidence and hurry on. The prose seems not so much written as administered, in short, doselike paragraphs and compressed sentences with an occasional tang of the precious:

Its appeal cut across social strata, from Astor to ash tender.

Lather now lent luster to the name Clare.

Not that Powers' achievement, in describing the rise of the corporations that pollute every corner of our world with souped-up molecules and mind-numbing slogans, isn't formidable: formidable is just what it is. Sensuous and involving it is not. When, in the tale of Laura's valiant attempt to maintain her motherhood and self-respect amid the horrors of chemotherapy, humanity makes itself felt, the overview quickly reduces it to negligible size. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

THE LAST RESORT, by Alison Lurie (Holt; \$22). Readers will find happy echoes of "Foreign Affairs" in Lurie's latest novel, in which a forbearing New England wife puts up with an overbearing nature-writer husband; he's twenty-four years her senior, famous, and secretly thinks he's dying. During a sojourn in the Florida Keys, opportunities for mixing and rematching abound: she is coveted by a celebrated poet and by a lush lesbian, while he is worshipped by a would-be savior of manatees. Lurie sets this gavotte in a Key West whose pastels take on a tasty acidity, and the novel goes down like Key-lime pie.

THE IRON TRACKS, by Aharon Appelfeld, translated from the Hebrew by Jeffrey M. Green (Schocken; \$21). Decades after the Holocaust, Erwin Siegelbaum spends his life travelling on the Austrian railroad, stopping in villages to look for Jewish relics and to hunt for the Nazi he holds responsible for his mother's death. With dry-eyed delicacy (Siegelbaum's pleasures as well as his nightmares are noted), Appelfeld shows how little the present can do to alter the past, and how relentlessly the past can confine the possibilities of the future.

THE KNIFE THROWER, by Steven Millhauser (Crown; \$22). In these darkly magical stories, Millhauser turns town squares, back yards, and department stores into strange and luminous realms. In "Clair de Lune," a boy insomniac tiptoes outside on a balmy night and encounters a group of teen-age girls playing midnight Wiffle ball; in "Flying Carpets," suburban kids ride around the neighborhood on those storied conveyances as if on Big Wheels; and in "Kaspar Hauser Speaks" a former wild child delivers a startlingly eloquent speech about his wish "to experience the ecstasy of mediocrity."

GENUINE REALITY: A LIFE OF WILLIAM JAMES, by Linda Simon (Harcourt Brace; \$35). "Is life worth living?" Gertrude Stein asked as an undergraduate. "Yes, a thousand times yes when the world still holds such spirits as Prof. James." To the extraordinary canon of James-family biographies, Simon has made her own remarkable contribution: a tender, ironic portrait of the philosopher William James, who came at the world with energetic diffidence and forged an inspiring philosophy of pluralistic, psychological nuance.

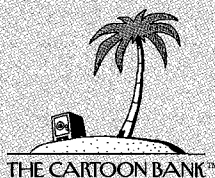
MERCE CUNNINGHAM: FIFTY YEARS, by David Vaughan (Aperture; \$75). Cunningham's work is a great riddle. He went to so much trouble—unhitching dance from music, assembling his pieces by flipping a coin—to get rid of drama. ("Climax," he once said, "is for those who are swept by New Year's Eve.") Yet his dances are wellingly dramatic. This book embodies the same mystery. It is abstemious; it aims to give only the facts. But in those facts, in Cunningham's groping from discovery to discovery, he becomes more touching and human than we have ever seen him before. The book has three hundred and fifty photographs, and they blow you away.



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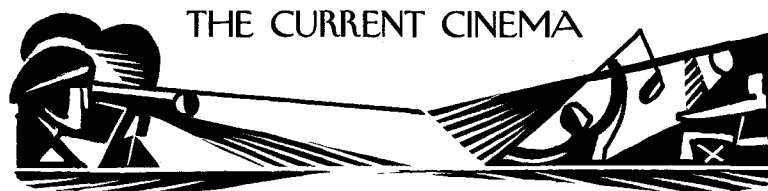
ANSWERS TO 8X10 CRYPTIC NO. 51

ACROSS

- 1 MUGS (anag.)
- 4 ST(A)Y
- 7 UNDO (hidden)
- 8 HYMN (*him* hom.)
- 9 SIGNED (anag.)
- 12 ANACONDA (anag.)
- 13 RE(X) ST + OUT
- 18 BUM + P INTO
- 19 TAU + T
- 20 P + EEL
- 21 AL(u)MS
- 22 (h)EARS

DOWN

- 1 MU(STAR)D
- 2 UNION (*no + in + U* rev.)
- 3 SONIC (anag.)
- 4 SHAQ (*sback* hom.)
- 5 TYLENOL (*lonely + T* rev.)
- 6 AMEND (anag.)
- 10 MA(XI), MUM
- 11 PATROLS (anag.)
- 14 EQUAL (hidden)
- 15 TRIPE (anag.)
- 16 UTTER (2 defs.)
- 17 OPTS (anag.)



THE CURRENT CINEMA

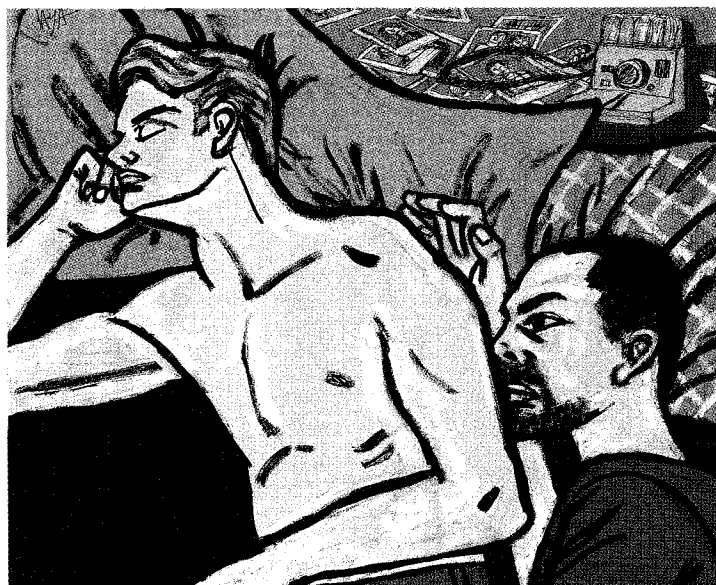
PRETTY IN PURPLE

Two new films, one campy and one ingenious, cruise Hollywood.

BY DAPHNE MERKIN

SOMETIMES it seems as if homosexuality has gone from being the love that dare not speak its name to the love that talks about itself incessantly. The drama of the closet—and coming out of it—has exerted an ever greater

For those of us used to this somewhat heavyhearted presentation of homosexuality, full of fear and self-loathing, "Billy's Hollywood Screen Kiss" comes as a departure. There's little angst, and even less gravitas. It's gayness served up lite, with



He's gotta have it: Billy (right, Sean P. Hayes) angles for a silver-screen kiss.

claim on our interest over the past three decades, moving from the margins to the center of our cultural stage, yet in books, film, and the visual arts the subject continues to throb like a freshly opened wound. In this year's wonderful "Love and Death on Long Island," an older man's crush on a younger man carries echoes of the larger world, in which desire goes mostly unrequited; in the more recent "The Hanging Garden," a young gay man returns home to reexperience the painful ordeal of his childhood, which he has presumably triumphed over by losing weight and opting for a life outside the dysfunctional realm of the nuclear family. The concept of gayness may no longer be taboo, but to be gay is still a problematic, if not tortured, choice—or so the movies that reach mainstream audiences would have us believe.

a cherry on top. Billy (Sean P. Hayes) is the sort of gay man who drives the religious right crazy: he not only embraces his sexual proclivities—"I am a homosexual," he announces, "a film buff with a penchant for women's melodramas"—but points out didactically that "straights" have a lot to learn from his story. An unemployed photographer, Billy goes around Los Angeles taking Polaroid snapshots of everyone he knows or has just met, and complains about his joblessness and unsatisfying love life to a female friend named, confusingly, George (Meredith Scott Lynn). George assures him that he is at his "creative peak," precisely because of his downcast state, and when Billy spies the great-looking Gabriel (Brad Rowe) working in a coffeehouse, he decides that the waiter is the perfect lead for his series

JAVA MCFII

of great Hollywood screen kisses, to be photographed with an all-male (half-drag) cast. He invites Gabriel—who, as someone remarks later in the film, looks “almost like a male Kate Moss”—back to his apartment and tries to figure out whether this shy hunk is gay. Although Gabriel refers obliquely to a girlfriend he has left behind, he has incredible abs, loves “Cabaret,” and says Thoreau is his favorite writer. So what’s a poor pansy to do? Hoping to coax Gabriel out of the closet, Billy makes pointed reference to the Kinsey scale of homosexuality, which ranges from one to six (“I’m a perfect six,” he proudly notes), and makes jokes about “the show-tune gene.”

Gabriel agrees to pose for Billy, who sets about shooting the famous beach scene in “From Here to Eternity” (with the transvestite and Warhol diva Holly Woodlawn in the Deborah Kerr role), along with other amorous moments from the Golden Age of cinema. But before Billy gets an answer out of his evasive model—*is* he gay? or is Billy doomed, as a friend suggests, to “karmic repetition compulsion”?—Gabriel is spotted by Rex Webster (Paul Bartel), a famous photographer of beautiful young men, and is whisked off to a Catalina underwear shoot. Billy traipses after him, peering through palm fronds and commenting sadly that the men in his life “keep disappearing to voices in the night.” All’s well that ends well, however: Billy gets to have his kiss, when he’s least expecting it and with someone he’s overlooked entirely.

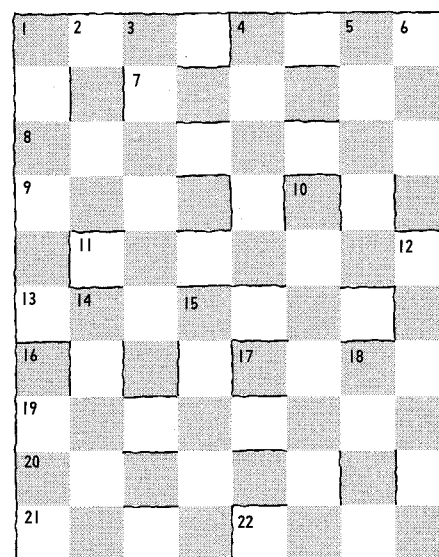
“Billy’s Hollywood” is a hoot, although it doesn’t have a whole lot to say to anyone who’s not young and gay and mirror-gazing, and I’m not sure how much it has to say to anyone who is, either. Written and directed by Tommy O’Haver, this is a divertissement that evaporates into the dust motes almost before it’s over. The movie’s strengths are stylistic, from its oversaturated Frida Kahlo colors—red, pink, yellows and blues—to its clever use of old-fashioned camera devices, like irises and wipes. There is a pleasantly deadpan quality to the filmmaking, as though everything had been shot against drop cloths in the same flat light. The camera stays fixed while people wander on and off the screen, creating a tableau-vivant effect that forces you into a greater appreciation of the details: the matching tones of turquoise in a drag queen’s dress, eye-

shadow, and lipstick, or a pair of earrings made of CDs. Still, there’s something maddeningly inconsequential about the whole enterprise. I may be one of those benighted creatures “too straight to appreciate fine camp,” as Billy puts it, but if making gay cinema new means appropriating the fluffiest aspects of teen heartthrob movies from the fifties and giving them a high parodic gloss, I think I prefer the tortured homosexuals of old.

Do go see Mark Rappaport’s elegant essay-documentary “The Silver Screen: Color Me Lavender,” which teases out the homoerotic subtext in Hollywood movies from the same period Billy is obsessed with. Rappaport, whose films include “Rock Hudson’s Home Movies” and “From the Journals of Jean Seberg,” begins with Spanish soldiers dancing together in a turn-of-the-century clip by Lumière and travels through the foppish comedies of the thirties, Second World War buddy flicks, and hypermasculine Westerns, on up to the domesticated fifties. He locates the “hints, allusions, and mixed signals” of suppressed gayness in the strangest places: Cary Grant and Randolph Scott we all know about; Bob Hope and Jerry Lewis simpered around the fringes of female impersonation; but who would have suspected John Wayne of “trans-gender gaffes”? Rappaport’s irreverent, sometimes scathing script (narrated by Dan Butler, the gay actor who plays a hetero stud on the television series “Frasier”) adroitly characterizes the unsettlingly flighty Danny Kaye as the “vestal virgin” of the borscht belt, and offers a dazzling exposition of Luchino Visconti’s “Rocco and His Brothers” as an overtly gay love story. His portrait of the “grizzled old prospector” type—the crusty sidekick, usually played by Walter Brennan, who specializes in making coffee and warning his pals away from women—is worth the price of admission. Rappaport has a talent for imaginative speculation which rivals Norman Mailer’s, but even he concedes that sometimes a cigar is just a cigar, and that hindsight comes with its own entrapment. “Do we know too much,” he wonders, “or did they acknowledge too little?” This dishy decoding of the “Hollywood telegraph system,” whose charades and winkly euphemisms masked a squeamish fascination with homosexuality, is a serious piece of fun. ♦

8X10 CRYPTIC

NO. 52 BY MIKE SHENK



ACROSS

- 1 Recordings featuring first-class rascals (4)
- 4 Confine group of sheep lacking leader (4)
- 7 Creature destroyed Manila (6)
- 8 Ascertained horse blankets used the wrong way (4,4)
- 9 Head of mathematics cut back test (4)
- 11 Relieve running back, even covered with grime (7)
- 13 Attack a sailor by the sound (7)
- 17 Tale following Pavlova's first bend in a ballet (4)
- 19 Impetuous people laugh at the commercials (8)
- 20 Drink that's brewed an excess of time after introduction (6)
- 21 Guinness Stout, cold (4)
- 22 Cutting through cake entirely (4)

DOWN

- 1 Showed up right before a shooter (6)
- 2 A German agreement by war hero (4)
- 3 Art movement platform filling block (7)
- 4 Hungarian composer's record listened to (5)
- 5 Chisel bit of rock in grotto (5)
- 6 Swiss artist's modeling material, reportedly (4)
- 10 Congress worker gets bad loot (7)
- 12 Kills a fawn's mother—a bad thing to do (4,2)
- 14 Wind beginning to stir body of water (5)
- 15 Temporary head of hospital interrupting a medico (2,3)
- 16 The person that is at a stop (4)
- 18 Inactive pop star in audition (4)

The solution to puzzle No. 51 appears on page 78. For a free copy of “The New Yorker’s Guide to Solving Cryptic Crosswords,” please send your fax number or a stamped, self-addressed envelope to “Solvers’ Guide,” The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. For an electronic version, send an E-mail to puzzleguide@newyorker.com.



THE SLEDGEHAMMER: HOW IT WORKS

BY STEVE MARTIN

MANY of today's adults, who are otherwise capable of handling sophisticated modern devices, are united by a contemporary malady: sledgehammer anxiety. "I feel I'm going to break it," "The old ways still work for me," "This is where technology leaves me behind" are the most common chants of the sledgehammer-phobe. Much of the initial fear comes from a failure to understand just how it works. By attaching a "heavy-weighted slug" (one of the many terms for the blob of lead at the sledgehammer's terminus) to a truncated super-cissoid, you create a disproportionate fulcrum. In other words, if you're a TV set showing Regis promoting a diet book, and you're in a room with an angry unpublished poet holding a sledgehammer, watch out.

The novice sledgehammerer (from the German *Sledgehammerammalama dingdong*) must be familiar with a few terms:

Thunk: This is the sound that the "clanker" (street term for the heavy-weighted slug) makes when wielded against the "stuff" (see next).

Stuff: Things that are to be wanged (see next).

Wang: the impact of the clanker and the stuff.

Smithereens: The result of being wanged.

Many people are surprised to find out that the sledgehammer has only one moving part: it. Yet "Should I buy now or wait for the new models?" is a refrain so often heard from the panicky first-timer, who forgets that the number of sledgehammer inno-

vations in the last three thousand years can be counted on one finger. There are currently just two types of sledgehammers on the market: the three-foot stick with a lead weight on the end, called the "normal," and a new model, currently being beta-tested, which is a three-foot stick with a lead weight in the middle and is called the "below normal." But don't let the market confusion keep you from getting your feet wet. The longer you wait, the fewer things you'll demolish.

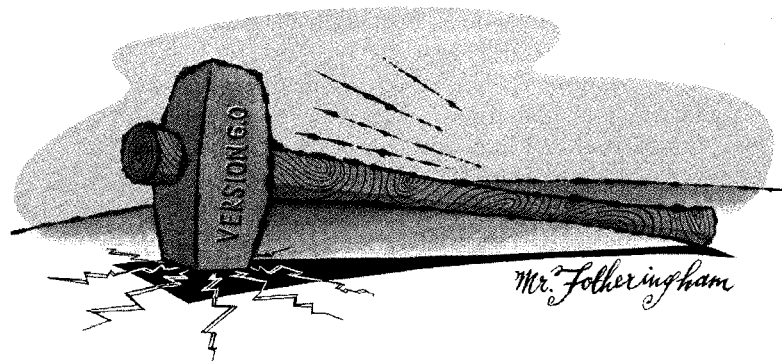
There is a natural fear of sledgehammers, says the National Sledgehammer and Broken Toe Society, which is charting the most common accidents and offers tips for the sledgehammer's safe use. The over-the-head position, for example, often leads to excruciating lower-body pain, caused when the sledgehammer wedges itself between the thighs at the end of the backswing. There is also the self-inflicted back-of-the-head knock-out on lateral swings, which is very rare, and afflicts only—to use the researcher's lingo—"really dumb people." There are also cleaning accidents. A home hobbyist in Valdosta, Georgia, reported that while he was removing paint from his sledgehammer it suddenly went out of control

and destroyed his living-room wall, even though he never let go of its handle.

Despite all these drawbacks, the world of the sledgehammer is rife with enthusiasts: "I find the sledgehammer very erotic," says Jane Parpardello, who is a stockbroker with Smith Barney and wants everyone to know that her home phone number is listed. "I think it's because my father was shaped like a sledgehammer: the long, wooden body, the big metal head. When I see a man with that shape, I want to pick him up and swing him against an apartment wall."

The sledgehammer king, Marty Delafangio, whose net worth is estimated at forty-two thousand dollars, was recently summoned before Congress to defend his reasons for attaching a mandatory Web browser to his market-leading product. "I smelled money to be made," said Delafangio. "The combination of a Web browser and a sledgehammer is a natural." Congress disagreed, and now the Web browser can be sold only as an optional addition, although in a compromise the powder-puff attachment remains.

In the last ten years, the sledgehammer has come into its own, finally recognized for what it is: a tool, a thing, and a heavy object. A hundred years from now, when technology has altered the sledgehammer's appearance to a sleek, digital, aerodynamic machine, it will no doubt function as it does today, toppling the mighty and denting the hard. ♦





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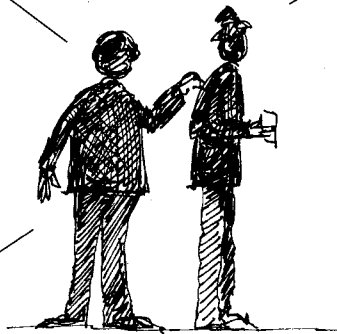
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